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PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES
UPON OUR
SAVIOUR's
SERMON
On the MOUNT.

In Eight VOLUMES.

B Y

OFFSPRING BLACKALL, D.D.
Late Lord Bishop of Exeter.

VOL. VII.

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THEATRICAL
DISCOURSES
BY
SAMUEL
COLMAN





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DISCOURSE LXVI.

Religion a Divine Security from
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MATTH. vi. 33.

*But seek ye first the Kingdom of
God and his Righteousness, and
all these things shall be added un-
to you.*



N discoursing on these Words
I have formerly proposed to
do these three things.

B 2

I. To

I. To explain the Nature of the Duty here enjoin'd; and that I told you was, to make Religion the chief Concern and Busines of our Lives; to desire the everlasting Welfare and Happiness of our Souls with a more fervent and passionate Desire than we do any earthly Good whatsoever, and to seek it and endeavour to obtain it in the Way of Righteousnes with greater Earnestness and Sollicitude than is allowable in the Pursuit of the Honours, Riches, or Pleasures of this Life, or even of our necessary Food and Raiment. For this Precept, *seek ye first the Kingdom of God*, is plainly opposed to those Prohibitions in the foregoing Verses; *take no Thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be cloathed*; from whence therefore it clearly appears, that the Design of this Text is to put us upon such a kind of Care and Thoughtfulness about our future Life, as we had been before forbidden to use about our temporal Life, or any thing belonging to it; so that whereas in our Desire of, and Endeavour after any worldly

ly

ly Good, we ought to be cool and moderate, and content sometimes to meet with Disappointments and bad Success, we may and ought, in our Desire of and Endeavour after this Happiness, and in using the necessary Means to attain it, to be as anxious and sollicitous as ever we can, this being an Affair of such great Importance to us, that we can't possibly exercise too much Care and Concern about it.

And therefore that I might persuade and enforce the Practice of this Duty, I propos'd in the second place,

II. To endeavour by some Arguments and Considerations to shew, how absolutely necessary, and how highly reasonable it is, that we should be thus more zealously and earnestly concern'd about our everlasting Salvation in the other World, and the necessary Means of attaining it, than about any thing in this Life, or even the Maintenance of Life it self. And to this purpose I have formerly urg'd these four Considerations.

1. That the greatest Care we can take is no more than necessary for Heaven; whereas a more moderate Care is abundantly sufficient for this World; i. e. for all the Necessaries of Life: and about Unnecessaries and Superfluities (which are oftentimes rather Burthens than Conveniences) we need not be much concern'd, seeing we may do well enough without them.

2. That in making that our chief Care we act agreeably to our Nature, and to the Design of God in sending us into this World; which was not that we might pass a few Years here in sensual Pleasures and Delights, but that by the good Use and Improvement of this short time, we might, thro' the Mercy of God, obtain for our selves a blessed Immortality.

3. That the Care and Labour that we bestow in seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, will bring us in more Profit, and turn to better Account

to

to us by far than our worldly Care can do : the Kingdom of God, which is the End we aim at, being infinitely more worth our Pains and Concern than any thing that this World can afford ; and that for these two plain Reasons. 1. Because by that we provide for our Soul, whereas by our earthly Care we only provide for the Body. And, 2. Because this serves only to provide for a short and uncertain Life ; that for an eternal State.

4. Lastly, That if we make *the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness* the chief Objects of our Care and Endeavour, we shall certainly reap the Fruits of our Labour, to our abundant Satisfaction ; whereas all the Care and Pains which we can bestow on worldly Matters may be bestow'd in vain. For tho' we seek these things never so earnestly and industriously, we may miss of gaining them ; or if we should not, yet it is almost certain, that when we have them they will not yield us that Content and Satisfaction

which we expected from them: whereas, on the contrary, if we *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, we shall certainly, thro' his Assistance and Blessing, obtain what we labour for; and when we have it, it will certainly prove, in the Possession and Enjoyment, as great a Good as it before appear'd to us to be; it will no ways deceive, but rather infinitely exceed all our Expectations concerning it; for *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor hath it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive the things that God has prepared for them that love him.*

These Considerations are, I think, of great Weight and Moment, and sufficient to engage us to the Practice of this Duty, of *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*.

All therefore that now remains needful to be done is only to answser an Objecti-
on that will readily be made against it;
namely, this.

That our present State and Condition
of Life will not suffer us to be so neglectful
of

of our worldly Concerns as we must needs be if we should follow the Direction that is given us in the Text, and make Religion our chief Business ; because if we should do so, we should be destitute of Food and Raiment, and other Necessaries for the Preservation of this Life ; which yet is necessary should be preserv'd and prolong'd as much as we can, if it were only that thereby we might make the better Provision for another Life ; seeing all the Provision that can be made for our future State, must be made while this Life is prolong'd and continued to us.

But now this Objection our *Saviour* himself has obviated in the last Clause of the Text, *all these things shall be added unto you. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* And this was the Point which I propos'd to discourse of in the third Place, and come now to speak to. Namely,

III. To explain the Meaning, and to shew the Force of the Motive whereby
our

our Saviour himself enforces the Duty here enjoyn'd; *seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and then, says our Saviour, all these things shall be added unto you.*

Which Words, *all these things shall be added unto you*, are not, however, as I have formerly intimated, so properly a Motive to the Duty, as an Answer to an Objection which may be made against the Practice of it; for 'tis not therefore our Duty, it is not therefore so very much our Interest, to *seek first the Kingdom of God*, because by so doing we shall be provided with the Things of this Life; for the Kingdom of God is to be first sought for, for its own Sake, because therein, i.e. in the Happiness of the other World, consists the highest and most consummate Happiness that we are capable of; and the Proposal of a lesser Good is by no means a proper Motive to persuade us to aim at a greater: but nevertheless, it may well be proposed to us as an Advantage, and as some farther Encouragement to us, to seek after that greatest Good, that by seeking that,

that, we shall be no Losers or Sufferers in any other respect; and that we shall not be, if while we are *seeking first*, with the most Earnestness and Concern, *the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, other good things that we have need of shall be thrown in to us over and above. The Assurance that is here given us, that making Religion our chief Business, we shall want nothing that is needful for the Body in this Life, is not properly a Reason why we should make Religion our chief Business; for we ought to make it so in prospect of the great Recompence of Reward which is promised to good Men in the other World, how ill soever we far'd in this; because, as Christians, we should *walk by Faith, not by Sight*, we should *not look at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen*, for *the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*; these temporal things are therefore by no means fit Objects of our Care and Endeavour, to whom far greater things, even eternal Life and Happiness, are

are propos'd, which while we aim at, we should overlook and despise every thing which is less ; and there is nothing in this World, not even Food and Raiment, not even Life it self, but is infinitely less : but it is our Infirmitiy, that we can't overlook and slight these temporal things so much as we should. It would, and we can't help it, be some Discouragement to us in our Passage to Heaven, to want necessary Provisions in our Way thither ; and therefore it must needs be a good additional Encouragement to us, to be assur'd that there is no Reason to fear our want of any thing by the Way, to be told that *Godliness has Promise of this Life as well as that which is to come, and so is profitable for all things.* This fully answers all Objections which we might have in our Minds against the Practice of it.

For I think there is nothing which can be objected against the Practice of the Precept in the Text, but only this, that such Care and Sollicitude as is requir'd in the former Part of the Text, in *seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness,* would

would be a probable Means of short'ning, or at least rend'ring very uncomfortable this present Life, by the want of Necessaries to support it. To this Objection therefore our *Saviour* here fully replies in the latter Part of the Text, by assuring us, that the *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, i. e. the making the eternal Happiness of the other Life our chief Aim, and Religion, or keeping a good Conscience in all things, our main Businels, will be so far from being an Hindrance to us in the Acquisition of such other things, as are needful for the Support and Comfort of this Life, that it will rather be a Furtherance thereto. *All these things*, says he, *shall be added unto you*. 'Tis as if he had said; " If you only la-
" bour for this World, you may fail of
" Success, you may be left quite destitute,
" even of those things wherein you seek
" to abound; for these things are at
" God's Disposal, and he gives them to
" whom he pleases, and in what Mea-
" sure he pleases; and has no where pro-
" mised to give the largest Portion of
" them

“ them to such as seek most for them, and
“ labour most diligently to obtain them:
“ but, if pursuing these things with a mo-
“ derate Care, you make it your chief Bu-
“ siness and Concern to *seek the Kingdom*
“ *of God and his Righteousness*, you shall
“ not only have what you chiefly seek,
“ but these other things shall by the divine
“ Blessing be added to you over and a-
“ bove. You shall certainly not only at-
“ tain what you labour chiefly for, the
“ Salvation of your Souls, but you shall
“ besides have all things necessary for
“ this Life thrown in to you, into the
“ Bargain.

This therefore is the Point which I am now to endeavour to make good, *viz.* not only that *seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness first*, is very consistent with all such Care as is needful for this Life; but also, that by seeking that chiefly and in the first place, and these other things only with a Care which is more moderate and subordinate to that, we shall, both according to the ordinary Course of things, and also by the Promise

mise and Providence of God, be much better secured against temporal Want, than we could be by employing our whole Care and Concern about providing for this Life only.

But before I proceed to the Proof of this Point, it will be needful first to state the Case truly, and to explain a little more fully the Meaning of the Promise that is here made to such as *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, lest otherwise mistaking its Sense, and expecting more than is promised, we should, upon the failing of our own Expectations, be tempted to charge God with Unfaithfulness.

All these things, says our Saviour, shall be added unto you. Here then we may take Notice,

1. What it is that is here promis'd, *all these things*, i. e. all such things as our Saviour had been before speaking of, that is, such things as we have need of to eat, and drink, and put on; *all these things shall be added*; i. e. not Riches

or

or Honours, not Plenty and Abundance. These are things which God does indeed sometimes throw in to good Men, of his free Bounty and Liberality, but they are not the Matter of this Promise; what things he has here engag'd his Word to supply them with are only necessary Meat, Drink and Cloaths, such things as we can't live without, or not with any tolerable Comfort. It is not promis'd to all such *as seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, that they shall be Princes, or great Men; that they shall always live in great State and Splendor; but only that they shall not be destitute of Neces-
saries: it is not promis'd, that they shall live in Plenty, but only that they shall live well enough.

2. When it is said, *all these things shall be added unto you*, we are not to understand those Words, *they shall be ad-
ded*, as if God did hereby engage, that such Men, as made Religion their chief Business, should be provided for by a spe-
cial and miraculous Providence, with
Food

Food and Raiment, and all the other Necessaries of Life, without taking any Care, or being at any Pains at all about them. God never makes any such unconditional Promises of any kind: but rather this Promise, made to such as do *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, supposes that they do also seek for such other things as they may have need of, with a secondary and subordinate Care; it supposes them industrious to get their own Living in those lawful Callings which they have been bred up to, or are able to exercise.

For indeed, if they be truly good Men, so they will, so they must be; they must be diligent in the Work of some lawful Trade, or Calling, to earn their own Living, or else they will be such as the Apostle styles *disorderly Walkers*. And so far is God from being oblig'd in Promise to provide Food and Raiment, and other Necessaries for such Men by a miraculous Providence, that he has expressly forbidden us to give any Relief at all to such Men; *i. e.* to such as are able to

work, but will not. 2 Thess. iii. 6. Now we command you, Brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw your selves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received of us, v. 10. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat, v. 11. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all; —now them that are such we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with Quietness they work, and eat their own Bread, v. 12. And in this same Sense those Words of the same Apostle in Tit. iii. 8. are commonly understood. This is a faithful Saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good Works; i.e. to profess honest Trades.— And again, v. 11. Let ours also learn to maintain good Works for necessary Uses, that they be not unfruitful.

This

This then is what we have to do to entitle us to this Promise; we must not only *seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, but likewise labour in some honest Calling to maintain our selves; upon which Terms we may reasonably trust, that we shall not want any thing that is needful for the Body while it is needful for it; *all these things shall be added unto you*. But then farther,

3. It is also to be noted and considered, that no temporal Promise, no Promise of any worldly Good whatever, can in any Reason be understood, as promising an Eternity of it; for if it did it would be improper to call it a temporal Promise. Now such is the Promise in the Text; it is a temporal Promise, it is a Promise only of such things as are needful for the Body in this temporal Life. These Words therefore, *all these things shall be added unto you*, can't, in any fair Construction, be understood to signify more, than as if it had been said, All those things, which are necessary for the Support of this tem-

C 2 poral

poral Life, shall be added, and continued to you, for so long time as God shall see good to continue you here in this World. But that will not be always; for he designs, and has prepar'd for those that love him, and seek his Kingdom, a better Portion than this: what he gives to them here, is given to them only for their present Subsistence; what he designs for their Pay, or Reward, will not be given them till after this Life is over. The best Men therefore must dye; and the sooner God takes them out of this miserable World, the better it is for them: and when God is pleased to take a good Man out of this World, he may take him away by what Death he pleases, by Famine, as well as by Gout, or Stone, or Fever, or Impostume, or any other Disease or Casualty; good Men and bad Men, all dye alike of all Distempers, and by every kind of Accident. And therefore there being, without doubt, many other more painful Ways of Dying than by Want, a good Man can't in any Reason think himself exempted from this, rather than from any other

other way of Dying; and the Promise in the Text is in its true Sense and Meaning made good to him, if by the Blessing and Providence of God he be supply'd with all things necessary for this Life, for so long Time as it shall be good for him to live in this World; and when once he is gone from hence, he will have lack of nothing that this World afforded.

4. It is to be farther considered, that there is one Exception, with which all the temporal Promises of God (and therefore this as well as others) are to be understood, and that is the Case of *Perfection*. We are, I say, to understand all the temporal Promises in Scripture, as made with this Exception; viz. unless God shall think fit, for his own Glory, and the Benefit of the World, to make us Examples of Suffering and Patience; and that this Exception is sometimes expressly made, is Reason enough for us to think it always intended, tho' it be not always expressly mention'd. And this Exception is most plainly made in *Mark*.

x. 30. where our *Saviour* promises to those that lose any thing for his Sake, that *they shall receive an hundred fold now in this present time*; but then he adds, *with Persecution*; i. e. so far as is consistent with that State of Persecution, which God may sometimes see fit to put his most faithful Servants into.

And accordingly we may observe, that the same Apostle, who in *1 Tim. iv. 8.* says, that *Godliness has promise of this Life*, says also in *2 Tim. iii. 12.* that *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer Persecution*; i. e. they must not think that any of God's Promises of temporal Good are to be understood, as promising an Exemption from Persecution. And our *Saviour* himself, who promises in the Text, that all the necessary things of Life shall be *added*, and thrown in to those, that *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, says elsewhere, *Luke xiv. 26.* that *if any man comes to him, and hates not Father and Mother, Wife and Children, yea and his own Life also*, i. e. who is not ready, if God sees good

good to put him to the trial, to lose every thing in this World for Christ's sake,
he cannot be his Disciple.

But then to abate somewhat the Force of this Objection, so far as the Promise in the Text seems to be affected by it, it may be consider'd, that 'tis what rarely or perhaps never happens, even in a time of Persecution, that any Man by keeping strictly to his Duty is, while suffered to live, both so clearly stripp'd of all as to be left destitute even of Necessaries, and also depriv'd of all Means of obtaining them. He may, indeed, (that's what has often happen'd at such times) incur the Loss of all which he has already gather'd and laid up, or of all which was left him by Friends, which he hop'd would have serv'd to maintain him as long as he liv'd; but the Cruelty of Persecutors, if it spares the Life, seldom goes so far, as to disable those whom they spoil of all from being ever after in a Capacity of earning a Living for themselves: and therefore I say, if the Loss which a good Man sustains by Persecution, be other ways supply'd and

made up to him; if after all that he had
is taken from him, he be able by his La-
bour and Industry to gain more; or if by
the Kindness of Friends, or even by beg-
ging (if he be not able to work) he is still
supply'd with all such Things as are neces-
sary for Life; with these he may, and
with these, if he be truly a good Man, he
will be contented: for, as our Saviour
says, Luke xii. 15. *a Man's Life consist-
eth not in the Abundance of the things
that he posseth.* Some Men may be,
and are contented, and consequently hap-
py, with a very little, while others, being
still gaping for, and reaching after more,
may be, and really are, very miserable in
the greatest Affluence and Abundance.
Nay, as the Apostle says, 1 Tim. vi. 6. *God-
liness with Contentment is great Gain.*
If a good Man, tho' he does not live in
such Plenty as he has formerly done, yet
may and does, notwithstanding his Scarcity,
live with Comfort and Peace in his
own Mind; the Promise of the Text, tho'
it seems to be not perform'd in the Strict-
ness of the Letter, is yet made good to
him,

him, according to its true Intent and Meaning; which is only that it shall be well with good Men, even while they live here. For it is, indeed, well with them, if in all their Wants and Distresses they can be content and chearful, much better than it is with those who can't be so in all their Plenty and Affluence. If no greater Affliction is laid upon them than they can well endure, of whatever Kind the Affliction is they may well endure it, considering how much their enduring it will conduce to the Encrease of their Reward in Heaven: for, as the Apostle says, *2 Cor. iv. 17. our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

The Sum then of that Encouragement which is here given by our *Saviour*, to the *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, is this, that if we are careful above all things to approve our selves to God, by a religious, sober and righteous Conversation, we shall not need to fear the ever wanting any thing which
is

is necessary for our Support and Comfort here in this World, so long as it shall be good for us to be here; for that God will either so bless our honest Labours, or else other ways will so supply us with these things, and withal indue us with such Contentment and Satisfaction of Mind in our Condition of Life, whatsoever it is, as that upon the Whole we shall be even in this World, while we continue in it, sufficiently happy; and much happier still shall we be when we shall be taken out of it, in what way soever we shall be taken. *This is the Meaning of the Promise, all things shall be added unto you.*

I proceed now to shew the Truth of it; or what Reason we have to trust, that if we are diligent and careful above all things to obtain the Favour of God, he will so order it by his wise and good Providence, as that either by our own Labour if we be not wanting to our selves; or if we are not able to work by the Bounty and Liberality of others whom he will stir up to be kind to us; or else by an extraordinary Providence, some how or other, we shall

shall be sufficiently provided for with all things needful for the Support of this Life, so long as God shall see good to continue us in it.

And we have great reason to trust that it will be thus with us, from the Consideration of the Goodness of God, and of the many express Promises which he has made to this Purpose in the holy Scripture.

We have, on the contrary, no reason to fear, that *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, other things should be wanted by us; because Religion and Virtue has no Tendency at all, naturally, to bring us to want, but rather the contrary.

I say, the chief and best Assurance we have that our necessary Care about Matters of Religion shall be attended with a Competency of all such things as are needful for the Support and Comfort of this temporal Life, is, partly from the Consideration of God's Goodness and Providence, and partly from the many express

press Promises thereof made in the holy Scripture.

(1.) I say, we might be sufficiently af-
fur'd, that seeking first the Kingdom of God
and his Righteousness, all other things
should be added unto us, only from the
Consideration of God's Goodness and Pro-
vidence in general, altho' he had not
made any express Promise thereof.

And this Argument is very well and
largely urg'd by our *Saviour* himself in
the Verses before the Text, to beget in
us a firm Trust in God's Providence, that
if we are not wanting in our Duty to him,
he will not be wanting in taking such Care
of us, as that we shall not be destitute of
any thing which is needful for this Life;
and this too, altho' we are not anxious
and sollicitous about it. For these are his
Words from the 25th Verse of this Chap-
ter, to the Words of the Text. *I say unto you, take no thought for your Life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your Body, what ye shall put on. Is not the Life more than Meat, and the*

the Body than Raiment ? Behold the Fowls of the Air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? Which of you, by taking thought can add one Cubit to his Stature ? and why take ye thought for Raiment ? Consider the Lilies of the Field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you , that even Solomon in all his Glory was not array'd like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the Grass of the Field, which to Day is, and to Morrow is cast into the Oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith ? Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat ? or, what shall we drink ? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed ? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things, &c. 25,—32. And then it follows ; but seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness ; and then all these things shall be added unto you, i. e. you can

can have no reasonable Cause to doubt, when you consider and reflect upon the providential Care of God about other Matters, but that it will much rather furnish and supply you with all such things as ye have need of for the Body.

But having already spoken at large to this Argument, shewing the Reasonableness of trusting in God for all things which we shall have need of for this Life, in a late Discourse upon those Words of our *Saviour* which I have now cited ; I shall say no more of it now. Especially, because altho' from the Consideration of God's Goodness alone, we might have been sufficiently assur'd of this, altho' it had not been expressly promis'd; yet, (as I said in the second Place)

2. The clearest and fullest Assurance which is given us of this, is from the many express Promises which God has made in the holy Scripture, that he will provide for the needful Support of all such as are diligent in the Discharge of their Duty to him; so that God having engag'd his Word

Word for it, upon the whole Matter, every good Man who makes it his chief Care to please God, and to keep a good Conscience in every thing, has indeed a much better Assurance of all things necessary for this Life, than he could have by spending all his Time and Thought in caring for this Life only.

And indeed the Promises of God to this purpose in the holy Scripture are so many, that it would be almost endless to mention them all; I shall therefore content myself, with only naming two or three which are very express.

Such is that in *Psalm xxxiii. 18.* *The Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his Mercy to deliver their Soul from Death, and to keep them alive in Famine.* Such is that in *Psalm xxxiv. 10.* *The Lions do lack and suffer Hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing;* and such is that in *Psalm xxxvii. 18, 19.* *The Lord knoweth the Days of the Upright, and their Inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed*

in

in the evil Time, and in the Days of Famine they shall be satisfied; and many more which might be mention'd.

And lest it should be said, that these are *Old Testament* Promises, and so do not belong to us; it may be consider'd, that God has been pleas'd also in the *New Testament* to renew them, and to give us fresh Assurances of his fatherly Care in protecting and providing for good Men, even in this Life.

For these Words of our *Saviour* in the Text, were plainly spoken to his Disciples as *Christians*, and not as *Jews*, and the Children of *Abraham* according to the Flesh, to whom the Promises of an earthly *Canaan* were made.

And St. *Paul*, who writing only to *Christians*, can't be suppos'd to have encourag'd them to their Duty by such Promises of temporal Blessing as did not belong to them, yet says expressly, *1 Tim. iv. 8.* that *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the Life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.*

And

And that even the temporal Promises of the *Old Testament* are not now out-dated, but do belong to us *Christians*, as well as they did to the *Jews* before our *Saviour's Time*, we are clearly taught by the Author to the *Hebrews*, *Heb. xiii. 5.* where he declares that the Promise made to *Joshua*, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, altho', at the first making of it, it seem'd to be a particular and personal Promise made to *Joshua* alone, is yet to be understood as an evangelical Promise made to every good Christian. *Let your Conversation be without Covetousness*, says the Apostle, *and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

And that not this one Promise only, but likewise all such other temporal Promises in the Book of the *Psalms* (and by the same Reason elsewhere in the *Old Testament*) do belong to us *Christians*, no less than they did to the pious *Israelites*, the same Apostle plainly enough intimates in the next Words to those be-

fore cited, *viz.* ¶. 6. by his citing a Text from thence, which, he says, we also may apply to our selves, for these are the Apostle's Words; *so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what Man shall do unto me.*

All which places, and I might cite many more Promises of God of the like kind if I thought it needful, are, I hope, sufficient to shew, that God's Providence does take special Care of good Men, even in reference to this Life, to maintain them with Comfort, and to provide for them all things that are necessary; insomuch that he has many times put himself to the Expence of a Miracle for their Sustenance, as he did for a considerable space of time in the Case of *Elijah*; and for forty Years together, while he fed his People of *Israel* with *Manna* in the Wilderness.

But the Story of *Solomon* is so very remarkable to this purpose, that I can't forbear taking Notice of it, especially because it is suppos'd by some, that our *Saviour*, in the Text, had an Eye and Respect

Respect to it. You may read it at large in the iii^d Chapter of 1 Kings; but the Sum of it is this.

God appear'd to him in a Dream, and bad him ask what he would; and all that he ask'd was, that he might have Wisdom to discharge well that great Trust which was repos'd in him: with which Petition of his, it is there observed, God was so well pleas'd, that he thereupon assured him, not only of that which he had ask'd, but added likewise of his own free Bounty (being not by his Promise thereto oblig'd) what he had not ask'd, Riches, and Honour, and Length of Days.

¶. 16. &c. *And the Speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing; and God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thy self long Life, neither hast asked Riches for thy self, nor hast asked the Life of thine Enemies, but hast asked for thy self Understanding to discern Judgment; behold I have done according to thy Words: lo I have given thee a wise and an understanding Heart, so that*

there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee: and I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both Riches and Honour, so that there shall not be any among the Kings like unto thee all thy Days. And if thou wilt walk in my Ways, to keep my Statutes and my Commandments, as thy Father David did walk, then will I lengthen thy Days. Which History is a Verification of our Saviour's Words here in the Text, in the highest and fullest Sense; that they, who seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, shall have all other things added unto him.

Nevertheless I do not bring this Story of Solomon as a Proof, that God will deal out these worldly good things, in so plentiful a measure; to all who do in like manner make it their chief Care to please God, and to do their Duty; I only bring it as an Evidence and Proof of divine Providence, and to shew that God does take particular Care of good Men; so that if they seek first his Kingdom, and
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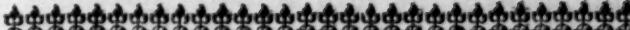
the Righteousness thereof; i. e. are careful above all things to seek the Love and Favour of God, by doing those things which are pleasing to him, they may be sure that they shall obtain it; and consequently having him, who has all Power in his Hand, for their Friend, shall not need to fear ever wanting any thing which is necessary or expedient, even for this Life, for so long time as God shall be pleas'd to continue them in it: for that (as I have shew'd before) is all that is here promis'd, only such things as are needful to carry them thro' this World, to a better. *All these things shall be added unto you.*

And indeed besides, if so much as this had not been promis'd, and without recurring to a special and extraordinary Providence, there would be no just Reason to fear, that our taking such Care as is necessary about Matters of Religion, call'd here in the Text, *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, should ever expose us to the Danger of temporal Want.

And this was what I propounded to make good in the second place, but, that I may not be tedious, I shall defer it to another time.



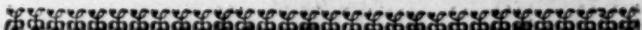
RELI-



R E L I G I O N

Consistent with and Conducive to

TEMPORAL INTEREST.



REGIMENT

of the Royal Guards

THE BRITISH ARMY



DISCOURSE LXVII.

Religion consistent with and conducive to Temporal Interest.



MATTH. vi. 33.

But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.



N discoursing on these Words I have formerly proposed to do these three things.

I. To

I. To explain the Nature of the Duty here enjoin'd; by shewing, what is here meant by the *Kingdom of God*, what by the *Righteousness of God*, and what it is to seek them, and what it is to seek them first.

II. To endeavour to enforce and persuade the Practice of this Duty by some Considerations, shewing the Necessity and the Reasonableness thereof. And,

III. To explain the Meaning, and shew the Force, and manifest the Truth of the Motive to this Duty which is annexed by our Saviour himself in the Text, *all these things shall be added unto you*. And to endeavour from thence to shew how void of all Excuse they are, who while they are careful and troubled about other things, do neglect, or take too little Care of this *one thing needful*.

And the two first of these Heads I have formerly spoken to; and the last time I enter'd upon the third, which was,

III. To

III. To explain the Meaning, to shew the Force, and to manifest the Truth of the Motive to this Duty, which is here, by our *Saviour* himself, urg'd in the Text.
All these things shall be added unto you.

Which Clause, nevertheless, (as I have already intimated) is not so properly a Motive to the Practice of this Duty, or a Reason why we should *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*; but may better be consider'd as an Answer to the only plausible Objection which can be made against the doing it. For *the Kingdom of God*, that is, the Happiness of the other World, (exceeding all which *Eye hath seen, or Ear heard, or the Heart of Man can now conceive*) is in it self so well worth our seeking for, that there needs no other Motive to induce us to seek for it, but only an Assurance that if we do seek for it, we shall obtain it. But nevertheless it may be objected against the Practice of this Duty, (and the Consideration thereof may be some little Baulk and Discouragement to us) that if we are so very careful and

and sollicitous as we are here commanded to be about our everlasting Well-being in the other World; we may be thereby hindred from making such Provision as is necessary for this present Life.

To this Objection therefore our *Saviour* here fully replies, by assuring us, that our *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, will be so far from being an Hindrance to us in our acquiring such things as are needful for the Support of this Life, that it will rather be a Furtherance thereto; for that, if we *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, we shall not only attain what we seek chiefly for, *viz.* the Salvation of our Souls, but shall have besides all such things as are needful for this present Life, thrown in to us (as it were into the Bargain) by God's Bounty and Goodnes. *All these things shall be added unto you.*

In order to the Explaining more fully the Nature of which Promise I noted, the last time, these four things,

i. That

1. That the things here promised, *all these things*, are only such things as are really needful for the Body; that is, Meat, Drink and Cloths; not Dainties, not Superfluities, but such things only as we can't live without. So that the very mean and low Condition in this World of some good Persons, is no Objection to the Truth of this Promise.

2. I farther noted, that even these things, the needful things of Life, are not promis'd unconditionally to good Men; but it is suppos'd, that they are honestly industrious to get their own Living; as indeed if they be really good Men, they must and will be. So that if an idle Man suffers Want, whatever Opinion he may have of his own Goodness, he must not charge God with Unfaithfulness, nor cast any Blame upon Providence; seeing he himself only is too blame, who neglects to use the Means which God has appointed, for the procuring of such things as we need for the Support of this temporal Life.

And

And for a Man who neglects the Means which are put into his own Power for his own Support, to look to be supported by Miracle, is a groundless and unreasonable Expectation; this is not to trust in God, but to tempt him.

3. I farther noted, that no Promise of any worldly Good can in reason be understood as promising an Eternity of it. When therefore 'tis said, *all these things shall be added unto you*, it is not meant, they shall be added to you for ever, but they shall be added to you for so long time as God shall see good to continue you in this World; so that when a good Man has finish'd his Course here, and God is pleas'd to take him to himself, he may (as consistently with the Truth of this Promise) take him out of this World by Hunger or Want, as by any other Disease or Casualty.

4. *Lastly*; I also noted, that this, as well as all the other temporal Promises of God, must be understood with an Exception

tion of the Case of Persecution; so that consequently whenever God sees good to make Trial of the Faith and Obedience of a good Man, or to make him an Example to the World of Suffering and Patience, he may make Trial of him by Hunger and Want, as well as by Stripes, or Imprisonment, or Death.

The Sum therefore of that Encouragement which was meant to be given by this Promise, is this; that if we are careful above all things to approve our selves to God by a sincere Obedience, we shall not need to fear the ever wanting any thing which is necessary for our Support and Comfort here in this World, for so long as it shall be good for us to be here; for that God will either so bless our honest Labours, or else will other ways so supply us with these things, and with all endue us with such Peace and Contentment of Mind in our Condition of Life, whatsoever it is, as that upon the whole we shall be even in this World, while we continue here, sufficiently happy; and much happier shall we be when we shall
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be taken out of it, in what way soever we shall be taken.

And having thus explain'd the Meaning of this Promise, I then proceeded to shew the Truth of it, or to declare the Reason we have to trust that it will be made good to us.

And the best Assurance which we have of this, was, I told you, from the Consideration of the Goodness of God, and of the many express Declarations and Promises which he has made in Scripture of his Fatherly Care and Providence over good Men. And this Point I have already spoken largely to. But,

2. I said also farther, that altho' this had not been expressly promis'd, and without recurring to a special and extraordinary Providence, there would be no just Reason to fear, that our taking such Care as is needful about Matters of Religion (call'd in the Text, *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*) should ever expose us to the Danger of temporal Want. And this is the Point I am now to speak to. And

And that there is no Danger of our ever being reduced to Want in this World, by our *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*; that is, by the Practice and Exercise of Religion; will, I suppose, sufficiently appear, if these three things be consider'd.

1. That *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, is very consistent with all such Care as is needful for the Body.

2. That many of the Duties of Religion, by the Practice whereof it is that we do *seek the Kingdom of God*, do also manifestly tend to promote our temporal Interest. And,

3. That there are none of the Duties of Religion, the Practice and Exercise whereof has a natural Tendency to reduce us to Want and Beggary.

I say, that the Duty here commanded, of *seeking first the Kingdom of God*

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and his Righteousness, is very consistent with all such Care as is needful for the Body, so that there is no Cause to fear that by the Practice of it we should at all impair our Condition in this World. For the poorest Man living may *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*; that is, may make it his first and greatest Care to be a good Christian, and to do his Duty; and yet be careful enough about the World, and have time enough to spend in making all needful Provision for himself, and those who depend upon him. For Religion does not oblige Men to leave their Trades and Professions, but only to be honest and industrious in them; not wholly to neglect this World, but only not to set their Affections upon it, and to seek for somewhat beyond it. It is not necessary, in order to our obtaining God's Kingdom, that we should be always at Church, or upon our Knees; but only that we should maintain a constant Sense of Religion in our Minds, and express the same at all reasonable times in solemn Acts of Devotion. So that there

there is no Man whatsoever but who may serve God, both in the Church and in his Closet; may pray to him as much and as often as he is enjoin'd to do; may give due Attendance to the Hearing and Reading of his holy Word, and perform whatever else is requir'd of him, without any Hindrance to his worldly Business, if he be but careful to lay out his Time and his Busines well before-hand.

Nay (as I have formerly observed in treating on these Words) so far is Religion from taking us off from such Care and Labour as is necessary for this World, that it commands it; one part of the Duty which is laid upon us by our Religion being to attend with Diligence to our particular Callings; according to that of the Apostle, *2 Thess. iii. 12. Now them that are such, that is, who are idle, and work not at all, (for of them the Apostle had been just before speaking) we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own Bread.* This therefore being a Duty laid upon us by our

Religion, we do by honest Labour and Industry in our lawful Callings, at proper and seasonable times, as truly seek the Kingdom of God, as we do by any Acts of Piety and Devotion in their proper season.

Let not any Man therefore pretend, that he can't be so careful as he should be for this Life and for the next too; for he may be both, if he will himself; and neither of these Businesses is really any Hindrance to the other.

Let not (for Instance) the poor Servant, or the labouring Man who gets his Living by hard Work; let not them, I say, pretend, (and yet they may of all Persons with most appearance of Truth pretend it) that the Works, which they are forc'd to let themselves to, to earn their Bread, do so engross and take up all their Time, that they can't discharge the Duty of the Text, of *seeking first the Kingdom of God*; or that if they should, it must be with Neglect of their Masters Business. For what is there, which if they had all their Time to themselves,

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they would do more than they may do now ? Would they then allot some Time in every Day for private Prayer and Reading ? So they may do now ; and if they can't take it from their leisure Time, from that Time in which they are not held to work, they may take it from their Sleep. Or would they, if all their Time were their own, constantly attend the publick Worship of God in the Church, on the Days appointed for Religion ? This also they may do now, if not constantly, at least very frequently ; and when they are by Necessity detain'd at Home, they may spend the Church-time, or a good part of it at least, in Prayer, and Reading, and private Meditation ; which, by the Blessing of God, may be as profitable to them who can do no more, as the publick Exercises of Religion may be to others. Or if what detains them at Home be some such Work as will also necessarily employ them there, as the looking after Children, or the Care of the Sick ; yet even such Works as these, tho' they employ their Bodies, leave the Minds for the most part

at liberty for devout Thoughts and pious Meditations. To which may be added, that Charity is as proper a Work for an Holy-day as Devotion; and therefore they need not fear that it is any Neglect of their Duty to God, if they are forced to spend that Time in doing good Offices to the Weak and Sick, which, if it had not been for that Necessity, they would have spent in some Exercise of Religion: for in such an Exigency as this, Mercy is more pleasing to God than Sacrifice.

What is it then, I say, that a Servant or a Day-Labourer may not do, which another Man not so ty'd to work might do, in order to the attaining the Kingdom of God?

For if the other may be devout and religious, so I have shew'd may he be too: he, I say, may have as much inward Piety and Devotion towards God as another Man; and if he don't, because he can't, spend so much of his Time in the solemn Exercises of Devotion, that will not be imputed to him as a Fault, so long as he spends therein as much of his Time as he can.

He

He may also be as strictly just and honest in all his Dealings as another Man; and if he be, his Virtue will be the greater and the more highly rewarded, because by reason of his Poverty, he lay under a greater Temptation to Dishonesty.

He may also be as charitable as another Man; I do not mean, that he can give away so much as they who have more may do; but he may give a little; and what he gives, he may give with a good Will: and if he does, his Work of Bounty will be accepted according to what he has, and not according to what he has not.

And lastly, he also may be as sober and temperate as any other Man; nay indeed the Necessity which lies upon him to work, and the Need which he has of all his Earnings to find himself and those who depend upon him with Necessaries, do really make the Virtue of Temperance easier to him than it is to others.

Now in these Instances the *seeking the Kingdom of God* consists, i. e. in Piety, Honesty, Charity, and Sobriety; and

therefore seeing he, who is most tyed to Labour, may nevertheless perform all these Duties, it is plain that the necessary Care for the things of this Life is no Hindrance to the Practice of the Duty of the Text; nor, on the other side, is *seeking first the Kingdom of God* any ways inconsistent with such Works as are necessary for the Support of this Life.

The Truth is, *seeking the Kingdom of God* is not so much a Business of Time, as of Concern and Thought, of Watchfulness and Resolution; so that we may and do truly practise the Duty of the Text, even when we are most industrious in any honest worldly Employment, provided that we always keep strictly to the Rules of Justice in our Dealings, and do not set our Heart and Affection upon this World. Even the Servant, or he who is hired to work, needs not think that Day mispent in which he keeps close to his Work; or that because he is then busily employed in some matter relating to this Life, as Plowing, Sowing, Reaping, Buying, Selling, or the like, he does therefore

therefore all that while neglect or intermix the working out his own Salvation ; for on the contrary , he is truly serving God all the while that he is serving his earthly Master : if, I say, he be careful, and honest, and industrious in his Master's Service , or in the Work and Employment which he is hir'd to , he serves his earthly Master and his heavenly Master both under one ; and at the same Time, and by the very same Labour of his Hands by which he earns Bread for the Support of this Life , he also makes a good Provision for another Life ; according to that of the *Apostle, Colos. iii.*

22. *Servants, obey in all things your Masters according to the Flesh, not with Eye-service as Men-pleasers; but in Singleness of Heart fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, unto the Lord, and not unto Men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the Reward of the Inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

So that you see the diligent following of our worldly Employments, is no Breach

Breach at all of the Duty of the Text, nor any Hindrance thereto ; provided that we take care to spiritualize our bodily Works ; and do, in the Prosecution of our worldly Busines, always keep our selves in a devout and religious Frame of Mind. And this we always may do, tho' our Work be never so hard, and tho' it requires never so close an Attendance. For we may, even while our Hands are employ'd in the Works of our Callings, have our Minds rais'd above this World, and the Pleasures of Sense ; we may, even while we are earning Necessaries for this Life, in our Hearts and Desires aspire after Heaven, and the Enjoyment of God ; we may have an Eye to his Glory and our eternal Welfare, as the principal End even of these secular Employments ; and this is to *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness.*

In fine ; the Design of this Precept is not to take us wholly off from, or to make us negligent about our worldly Interests and Concerns ; but only to regulate our Endeavours, and to moderate our Desires
after

after them, and to persuade us to mind these things with less Carefulness and Concern, than we do those things which appertain to another Life ; and that we may do, and yet mind them enough. And, therefore, seeing *seeking the Kingdom of God first*, is so plainly consistent with all such Care and Labour as is needful for this Life ; the present Necessity which lies upon any of us to provide for the Body, is manifestly no Objection against our practising this Duty. Especially if it be consider'd farther in the second Place,

2. That the Duties of Religion, or of an holy and virtuous Life, by the Practice whereof it is that we do *seek the Kingdom of God*, are, many of them, such as do also plainly tend to promote our temporal Interests, to encrease our worldly Store, or at least to preserve it from Wasting and Diminution.

For a good part of our Religion consists in abstaining from the sinful Pleasures and Vanities of the World, which are commonly very expensive both of our Time
and

and of our Money : for what are the common Causes of Men's falling into Decay and Want ? Are they not, for the most part, Intemperance or Prodigality, or a riotous Course of Living ? Is it not the spending what they have, either in Gaming, or Drinking, or in keeping Company with lewd Women ? Or else, is it not because they are idle and lazy, and neglect their Business ? These, I say, are the common Causes of Poverty : and therefore a good Man, and one who fears God, and makes it his chief Design to please him, is manifestly in less Danger of coming to Want than another ; because all these Courses by which it is that Men are commonly reduc'd to Want, are also Breaches of his Duty to God, which he, as being a good Man, can by no means allow himself in.

And as for the rest of our Duties, such as Meekness and Humility, the Love of God and of our Neighbour, Justice and Peace, and the like, together with the external Fruits and Exercises thereof; these if they do ever hinder us from any Gain, or

or put us to any Charge, or cost us any Time, yet 'tis not so much as the contrary Vices would do.

Thus it appears, that many of the Duties of Religion are such as do plainly tend to preserve at least, if not to encrease our Store; and therefore it is evident that thus far the necessary Care which we are bound to take for this Life is no Objection against *seeking first the Kingdom of God*; seeing that at the same time, and by the same Acts of Virtue by which we seek this, we do also take the best Care we can for that.

Some few Duties of Religion indeed there are which may seem an Hindrance to our thriving in the World, which may be thought to restrain us from making such good Provision for this Life as we might otherwise do; or may be reckon'd chargeable or expensive, and consequently such as may expose us to the Danger of Want: as namely, (*First*) All religious Exercises, which can't be perform'd but in time; and that Time being taken from our worldly Busines, must needs be some Hindrance to it. (*Secondly*) The strict Observation

servation of the Rules of Justice in our Dealings, which must needs hinder us from making so much Gain, as other Men may do who have no such Restraint upon them. And (*Thirdly*) above all, the Practice of Charity, which (if of things necessary to be done, one may be judg'd more necessary than another) is a Duty of all others the most necessary for the obtaining God's Kingdom: but now to part with what we have to the Poor, who are not able to requite us, is plainly to wast and lessen our Stock, and the ready way to come to want our selves.

In answer to which Objections, I therefore propos'd to shew in the third Place.

3. That there are none of the Duties of Religion the Practice and Exercise whereof have a natural Tendency to reduce us to Want and Beggery; no not those three before-mention'd, which of all others do seem the most contrary to our worldly Interests, and the most likely to keep us from thriving, or to endanger our coming to want.

(1.) Then;

(1.) Then ; against what has been said ; that the Practice of Virtue and Religion by which it is that we *seek the Kingdom of God*, is in no Instance prejudicial to our secular Interests ; it may be objected, that we are oblig'd by the Rules of our Religion to spend much of our Time in Prayer and Meditation, in hearing and reading the Word of God, and such other Duties as are properly call'd Exercises of Religion, the taking away which Time from our worldly Busines must needs be some Hindrance to it ; because we can't attend to these Duties as we ought, without separating our selves at such times wholly from the World, and withdrawing not only our Hearts but our Hands too from our secular Employments.

But in answer to this it may be sufficient to consider, how very little that Time is which we are bound to spend in such Exercises, in comparison with what the most busied Man may spare from Matters altogether useless and unnecessary.

For

For it is not the serving God, but our own Carelessness and Negligence which robs us of our Time; when we spend those Hours and Days to no purpose, or in sinful or immoderate Pleasures, or in excessive and carking Cares, or in melancholick Fancies and waking Dreams, or in impertinent Visits and idle Talk, or even in doing nothing at all, which might have been employ'd in the Works of our Calling, or in Acts of Piety and Devotion.

What is it now and then in the midst of our worldly Busines to cast up an Eye to Heaven, and send up a grateful Acknowledgment, a short Petition, or some pious Ejaculation thither? What is it to allot some little time every Day for our Morning and Evening Sacrifices of Devotion, or one Day in seven for our publick Worship and Service? All this would be but a very small and insensible Hindrance to our worldly Concerns, if we were careful not to squander away the rest of our Time. And all this, and more, if need were, might ordinarily well enough be spar'd from our Sleep, from our long Meals,

Meals, and Excess in Eating and Drinking, from our Recreation; nay more, I fear I may add, from our Sin. And I believe there is not any Man so necessitous; but who, if he would husband his Time well, and be careful to lose none of it, might find enough for all the Duties of Religion, and yet be as industrious in his Calling to get a Living as he is now. But,

2. It was farther objected, that the strict Observation of the Rules of Justice in our Dealings, must needs hinder us from making such Gain, as we might do, if we had no such Restraint upon us.

In answer to which therefore it may be considered, that the Text (*all these things shall be added unto you*) does not say, neither do I affirm, that a Course of Justice and Honesty is a probable way of growing rich so suddenly as some Men do by Fraud and Extortion: but all that I affirm, and all that I have Ground from the Text to affirm, is only, that a just and honest Man needs not fear that his

Honesty will ever be a Means of reducing him to Want. And this daily Experience and Observation do sufficiently attest the Truth of; *viz.* that Justice and fair Dealing, tho' it be not always so quick, is always a more lasting way of getting. The Oppressor and unjust Dealer may perhaps get more in a little Time at first; but when he is once discover'd (and his Knavery can't be long, will not be always hid) his Gain to be sure is then at an end. Nay and it often happens, that he is forc'd to disgorge at once all his ill-gotten Wealth, and so is driven ever after, for want of Friends and Reputation, to live in extreme Want. Whereas the just and honest Dealer, who is content with moderate Gains, tho' he will not probably, without some great Hit, ever get together such a great Heap as the other may do; yet runs no such Hazard as the other does of being undone and stripped of all, and is consequently much more probable to be exempt from extreme Poverty. But,

3. The greatest Objection of all against what has been said, that the Practice of Virtue and Religion is in no Instance prejudicial to our worldly Interests, is the Precept of Charity. For what can seem a more ready way to Want, than to be continually giving away what we are justly and honestly possessed of, to such as are never able to requite us?

But to this it may be answered.

(1.) That no Man is oblig'd to give away to others more than he can spare from himself; except in some extraordinary Cases: as when he has a particular Command to do it; which was the Case of the young Man in the Gospel, whom our Saviour commanded to *sell all and give to the Poor*; or when the Number of the Poor is so very great, and their Necessities so pressing, that nothing less will suffice to supply their Needs, than the stripping our selves of all: which was the Case of the first Christians, who therefore had all things common; and of whom

as many as had Lands and Houses sold them, and brought the Price, and laid it at the Apostles Feet, that Distribution might be made to every Man out of it as there was need. But this was plainly an extraordinary Case; this was indeed a great Trial of the Faith of those new Converts in this Promise of our *Saviour, all these things shall be added unto you:* but they believ'd him, and the Promise was made good to them; for tho' they gave away all, yet they wanted nothing afterwards which they had given away. So it is particularly noted by St. Luke, *Acts iv. 34. Neither was there any among them that lacked.* They who thus parted with their whole Estates at once to Charity, (the Exigency of the Times then requiring it) far'd afterwards, if not quite so well as before, yet well enough; they wanted nothing.

But this (as I said before) was an extraordinary Case: for ordinarily no Man is oblig'd to impoverish himself for the Maintenance of others; because a less Charity is sufficient for that Purpose. And if

if a Man gives away no more than he can spare, he may be the poorer for his Charity, but he will never bring himself to Want by this means. Nay,

(2.) As he may order the matter he may give away a good deal, and yet not be the poorer for it; that is, I mean, by allotting and laying aside weekly, monthly, or yearly, as it comes in, such a certain Part of his Gain for charitable Uses, and by computing and reckoning his Income at so much less, and so ordering his Expences as he would really do, in case his Gains or Receipts were indeed so much abated.

For there are very few, except such as are themselves Objects of Charity, (and such are not much concern'd in the Precept of giving Alms; there are, I say, I believe, very few, if any, besides such) but who if they can and do live within Compass upon their present Income, whatever it is, might also and would live within Compass, in case their present Income were lessen'd, or abated by a tenth or a

twentieth part ; or, in case as their Income now is, they are able to maintain themselves and Families to their Content, and likewise to lay up somewhat for Sickness, or old Age, or Children, they would likewise be able to do the same, altho' their Gains were a tenth or a twentieth part less than they are. So that if, as their Receipts come in, they should lay aside such a certain Part or Portion thereof for charitable Uses, and reckon only the remaining Parts as their own, it would be easy for them, by cutting off somewhat out of every Head or Article of their Expences, and abating somewhat in their way of Living in every respect; so to order Matters, as that, notwithstanding this Abatement of their Income by what they lay aside for Charity, they might at the Year's end be as rich, as if they had given away nothing. Or,

(3.) If it be suppos'd, that the charitable Man, *who disperses abroad, and gives to the Poor*, will not be so rich as another Man in the same way of getting may

may be, who gives away nothing; yet still this is no Objection against the Truth of this Promise, *all these things shall be added unto you*: the Meaning of which (as I have already frequently hinted) is not that they who *seek first the Kingdom of God* shall be richer than others; but only that they shall not (supposing them careful and industrious) be miserably poor: and that any Man should become so, by giving away to the Poor what he may, if he will, save out of his own Expences, is not at all probable.

So far from that, that, considering the divine Blessing which does always attend such Men, they do usually thrive much better than others; according to that Observation of the holy Psalmist, *Psalm xxxvii. 35. I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the Righteous forsaken, nor his Seed begging their Bread.* Which same Observation is also made by *Solomon, Prov. xi. 24. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to Poverty.*

And indeed besides, if we only consider the Nature of Men, and the common Course of things, it is almost impossible that a charitable Man should ever be so necessitous poor as any rich Man may come to be, who gives away nothing.

For supposing (as the wise *Man* observes) that *Time and Chance happen to all alike*, and that a good and charitable *Man* may by some great Loss, or Misfortune, or Unsuccessfulness in his Business, come to lose all he has; yet still this is no more than what may, and what does often befall such as are most sollicitous for the World, and never part with any thing which they have for the Relief of others: these Men also do meet with Losses and Disappointments, and are sometimes, notwithstanding all their Care and Saving, reduc'd to extreme Necessity. Now, I say, when this Case happens to both of them, as it may do, and at least as probably to the latter as to the former; the charitable *Man* will have a great Advantage of the other, who is then in the same low Circumstances: because he by his former

former Charity will have made himself many Friends against such a time of Need; for 'tis not unlikely that many of those whom he has formerly oblig'd will be then in a Condition to shew the like Kindness to him. Or if there be none such, yet every one will think himself oblig'd to take care of him, who was himself, while able, a generous Benefactor to others. Whereas the covetous Miser, who, when he was in a Condition to be kind to others in want, hoarded up, and kept all to himself; if ever he should come to want, will be deserted and unpitied by all.

Thus, I hope, I have shewn, that if we are careful to *seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, we have no reason to doubt, but that *all other things shall be added unto us*. For besides the Assurance which we have of this from the Goodness and Promises of God, (which Point I have formerly insisted upon) I have now also shewn, that (without recurring to an extraordinary Providence) there is no Danger of our ever being brought to Want by the Practice of Religion.

gion and Virtue; because the necessary Care about Matters of Religion is very consistent with all such Care and Labour as is needful for the Body; and because many of the Duties of Religion are such as do manifestly tend to promote our temporal Interests; and because there are none of them the Practice and Exercise whereof has a natural Tendency to reduce us to Want and Beggery.

But to all that has been said, some perhaps will be ready to object their own Experience, who tho' they now spend their whole Time, Sundays as well as Working-days, in caring for this Life, and improve it as much as ever they can for this Purpose, by embracing all Opportunities, whether lawful or unlawful, of enriching themselves; and also keep whatever they can get to their own Use, never parting with any thing to the Poor and Needy, can yet make but a very hard Shift to live: and this is to them a Demonstration, that if they should practise the Duty of the Text, and *seek first the Kingdom of God*, that is, if they should bestow

bestow less Time and Care on these things than they do, or be so nice as to keep strictly to all the Rules of Justice and Honesty, or ever part with any thing to others, they should not be able to get, or should not have enough left, wherewithal to maintain themselves.

In answer to which, I will not deny but that this Matter of Fact may be sometimes true; that is, that many of those who have no Care at all but for this Life, do nevertheless live in great Straits or Wants.

But then I say, that the Inference or Conclusion drawn from thence is not true, *viz.* that if they should take less Care for the World, their Wants would certainly be greater than they are: but the Truth of the Case may be this, that their too great Care, and their too little Conscience may be the Reason that they thrive no more; and that possibly they might be able to maintain themselves more comfortably if they were not so anxious and solicitous about it as now they are. *For the Race is not always to the swift, nor the*

Battel

Battel to the strong ; but there is a God above who over-rules all these things, and disposes of Events as he pleases ; who gives to one Man Power to get Wealth, and not to another ; and without whose Blessing upon Men's Labours, it is in vain that they rise up early, and take their Rest late, and eat the Bread of Carefulness.

If therefore it be true, as they themselves now own, that their Minds are so wholly taken up with worldly Cares, that they have no leisure at all for the Worship and Service of God ; and if it be true, that they make no Conscience of observing those Rules of Justice in their Dealings which he has prescrib'd, and that they never, or very rarely, upon any Occasion, part with any thing to the Poor ; the hard Shift which they are put to, to live, is no more than they ought in reason to expect. For they can have no Claim to the Promise of the Text who do not perform the Condition of it ; neither are they proper Objects of God's Care and Blessing, who do so plainly distrust his Power and

Provi-

Providence, and reject or resist his Authority.

Seeing therefore the Method they have hitherto taken has been so unsuccessful, this is plainly no Reason why they should continue it; but rather, it is a good Reason why they should try another, even that which is here prescrib'd, of *seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness.*

And if they would be persuaded to take their Thoughts a little from the World, and to allot some Portions of their Time for God's Worship, and to seek his Blessing by a careful Discharge of all their Duties to him, and the constant Exercise of Justice and Charity, 'tis likely this Way would succeed better. Let them but take this Course, and then they may reasonably hope with less Care and Sollicitude for the World, to live better in it than they do now. For it is not the Care and Labour of Man alone which can make him thrive without God's Blessing, but that, with less Care and Labour, may be sufficient to do it; nay and that will do it. *Seek first the King-*

*Kingdom of God and his Righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto
you.*

But they would have God beforehand with them; and if he would but give them in hand such Store of all things needful for this Life as they can ever have occasion to use; then, they say, having no other Care lying upon them, they would apply themselves to Religion, and set themselves with all Diligence to *seek the Kingdom of God*.

But is it so then, that God has lost (as I may say) his Credit so much with us that he may not be trusted? Is he indeed, is he known to be, so bad a Paymaster, as that we can't prudently undertake his Work unless we have our Wages beforehand?

But suppose, for once, that God should answer the unreasonable Desire of these Men, and grant them all those things beforehand which our *Saviour* here promises shall be added to those who make Religion their main Concern; what more reason would they have then to set themselves

selves to seek the Kingdom of God than they have now ?

Perhaps they may say, that then they should be bound in Gratitude to do it ; but are they not, are we not all of us, bound in that respect already ? Let us consider what great things he has already done for us undeserving, and how much Good he bestow'd upon us before we had done him any Service : for he has given us Life which is more than Food and Raiment ; and he has most tenderly preserved our Life, tho' we have been hitherto very unmindful of his Kindness. How then can we think that he will use us worse when (if I may be allow'd so to speak) we shall deserve better ? How can we imagine, that when in a due Sense of what he has done already for us, we shall heartily devote our selves to his faithful Service, he will then forsake us ?

But perhaps it will be said by these Men, that if they were once by the Bounty of Providence freed from these worldly Cares, and from the Fear of future Want, the Glory of the other World alone

alone, without any other Consideration, would then be sufficient to engage them to seek for it: but then I may ask, what Assurance they have, that by *seeking the Kingdom of God* they shall obtain it? For they can have no other Security of this, but from the Goodness and Promise of God; and the same Goodness and the like Promise of God they have, that if they set themselves heartily to serve and obey him, they shall not want any thing which is needful even in this Life. How then is it to be thought that they would trust him, for bestowing upon them the Blessing of Heaven and eternal Happiness, which is the greatest Blessing and Gift that he can bestow, when they are afraid to trust him for these earthly things which are far less? Certainly, if their Faith be so little that they can't trust him for the Performance of this Promise, *all these things shall be added unto you*; the same Infidelity would much rather make them distrust his Performance of the other. So that I can't but think that if God, in Condescension to the Weakness of these Mens Faith,

Faith, should supply them with all things needful for the Body, both for the present and for the future Time of their Life, they would be then every whit as backward to the Duties of Religion as they are now; they would thus, thro' the same Distrust of the Divine Goodness and Promises, be for having Heaven also in present Possession, before they would set themselves to perform the Condition requir'd of them to intitle them to it. This, I'm sure, is Matter of daily Observation; that they, who have the least Need of worldly Cares, are not the most free from them; nay, I believe I may say, they are commonly most oppress'd with them: and 'tis our *Saviour's* own Observation, that the poor of this World are for the most part in a better Disposition and Preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven than the rich.

Their Pretence therefore is manifestly vain and groundless, who say they can't so apply themselves to Religion and the Service of God as they would do, because they are poor and low in the World; for

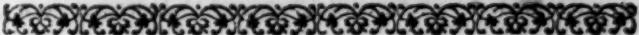
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rather their hard and low Circumstances in this present Life, ought to make them the less fond of it, and the less careful about it, and the more concern'd to obtain a happy and glorious Immortality in the other World. Being morally certain that they can't, by any thing they can do, raise themselves to worldly Greatness, they should the rather make it their earnest Endeavour to seek for the highest Glory and Honour in Heaven, of which they are as capable as any other Persons whatsoever; especially being here also farther assur'd by our *Saviour*, that if they *seek first the Kingdom of God*, they shall not only obtain that, but also have *all these things added unto them*.

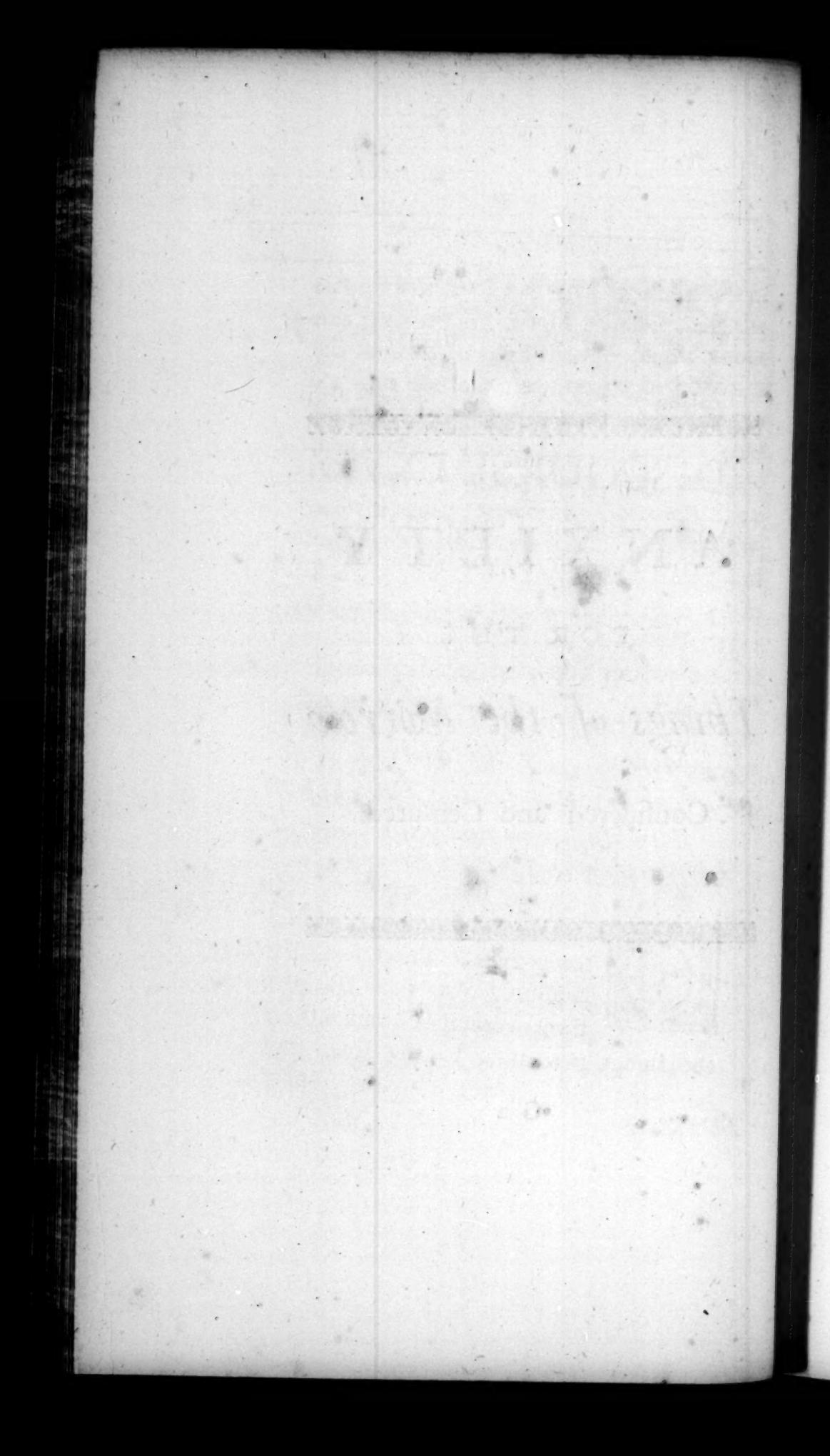
Now to God the Father, God the Son, &c.



ANXIETY



A N X I E T Y
F O R T H E
Things of the Morrow
Considered and Censured.





DISCOURSE LXVIII.

Anxiety for the Things of the Morrow considered and censured.



M A T T H. vi. 34.

Take therefore no Thought for the Morrow ; for the Morrow shall take Thought for the Things of it self ; sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.



OUR Saviour, in several Verses foregoing the Text, had been labouring to free his Disciples from overmuch Carefulness for the things pertaining to this Life ; not

G 3 only

only those things which are superfluous and unnecessary, as Wealth, Honour and Abundance, (about which nevertheless the greatest Part of Mankind do mostly disquiet and torment themselves;) but even those things which are most necessary for the Support and Comfort of this present Life, Food and Raiment: we may be too careful even for these things; *Take no Thought*, says he, *v. 25, for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your Body, what ye shall put on:* having enforc'd which Exhortation in that and the seven following Verses, by several weighty and convincing Reasons; he proceeds in the Verse before the Text (on which I discours'd the last Time) to direct us rather to bestow our principal Care in providing our selves for another Life, by a conscientious Discharge of all those Duties which God requires of us; because that by so doing, we shall farther engage the Goodness and Providence of God to supply us with all things necessary for our present Support. *But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righte-*

Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. And then follow immediately the Words of the Text : Take therefore no Thought for the Morrow, for the Morrow shall take Thought for the things of it self; sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.

Which Words may therefore be expounded in two Senses ; for,

i. If we take the Phrase here us'd, *take no Thought*, in the same Sense in which it had been us'd at the 25th and 31st Verses, then these Words contain only a Repetition and Reinforcement of the same Exhortation which our *Saviour* had made before ; (*viz.* that we should not be over careful and sollicitous in providing for our future State and Subsistence in this World;) pres'd by this farther Argument, that if any such Care and Sollicitude be necessary, at least it is not necessary yet a while ; and that it will be soon enough for us to be anxiously sollicitous about these things, when the Time comes that we shall have need of them for present

G 4 use.

use. *Take no Thought for the Morrow; for the Morrow shall take Thought for the things of it self.* Or else,

2. We may understand that Phrase, μὴ μεμνήσθε εἰς τὸ αὔριον, thus; *be not thoughtful against the Morrow; i. e. be not perplex'd, and troubled, and disquieted before-hand, with the Thoughts of any Evil which may besal you to Morrow, or at any Time hereafter in this World; be not in Pain now, for the Pain which you may possibly undergo another Time.*

And this Sense of this Precept seems to me to correspond better with the last Clause of the Words; *sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof;* and is besides very apposite to what our *Saviour* had been discoursing of in the foregoing Verses. For if we take the Words in this Sense, they plainly remove that which is the Ground and Reason of Mens over Carefulness and Sollicitude about the Means of their present Subsistence; *viz.* an unreasonable and excessive Fear of future Evils. For that which chiefly prompts

Men

Men to be so sollicitously careful, as worldly Men generally are, about these things, even about Meat, Drink and Cloaths, is a sad and fearful Apprehension of the Misery of wanting them; the Foresight of which puts them to as much Pain, and creates as much Trouble and Disquietude in their Minds, as the real want of them would do. Now this, our *Saviour* here says, is very foolish and unreasonable; *take no Thought for the Morrow*; i. e. be not thus pain'd and disquieted beforehand by the Fear, Foresight or Pre-apprehension of future Pain and Misery; *for the Morrow shall take Thought for the things of it self*; i. e. when those Evils come, which you have this Prospect and Pre-apprehension of, then indeed you can't chuse but be griev'd and troubled. And *sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof*; i. e. the present Pain and Misery of such Evils, when they do come (if ever they should happen) will be a sufficient Load and Burthen to you; you will be miserable enough when they shall be actually present; why then should you
anti-

anticipate your Misery, and torment your selves before the Time?

And this is that Sense of the Words wherein I intend at present to discourse of them; *take no Thought for the Morrow, for the Morrow shall take Thought for the things of it self; sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.* Only in discoursing upon this Subject, I intend not to confine my self to those Particulars which our *Saviour* here especially refers to; but shall endeavour to shew more generally, the Folly and Unreasonablenes of tormenting and disquieting our selves before-hand with unnecessary Fears and dismal Pre-apprehensions: whether of those, or of any other Evils and Calamities, which are incident to Men while they live in this World. *Take no Thought for the Morrow;* i. e. be not before-hand troubled and disquieted with the Thought of any Pain which you may endure, or any Evil or Calamity which may befall you in this World, to Morrow, or at any Time hereafter.

In discoursing on which Words I shall do these four things.

I. I shall shew, what Thoughtfulness about the future, was not meant to be here forbidden.

II. What Thoughtfulness about the Evils which may befall us hereafter, is unlawful and unreasonable.

III. I shall endeavour to represent to you, the Vanity and Unreasonableness of such Fear and Disquiet about our future State in this World, as is here forbidden. And,

IV. Lastly, I shall propose some Remedies for the Cure of it.

I. I shall shew, what Thoughtfulness about the Evils which may befall us hereafter in this World, was not meant to be forbidden in this general Prohibition. *Take no Thought for the Morrow.* And,

i. First of all, we are not to understand these Words as if it was our Duty to live in

in this World in a State of perfect Security. Tho' we are now in Health and Peace, tho' we now enjoy great Plenty and Prosperity, we are not bound to presume that we shall always continue in this happy Condition: nay indeed we are not at any time to think that the State of human Affairs is so firm and immutable, so fix'd and settled, as that no Change can possibly happen.. For,

(1.) First of all; such an Opinion of the Certainty of any thing in this World is very false and ungrounded, and it can't be our Duty to believe a Lye; for the Histories of all Ages, and every Day's Experience and Observation, may abundantly assure us, that there is nothing at all certain in this World. It is therefore an unreasonable Vanity and Presumption for any Man to promise himself an Exemption from those Chances and Changes, which he daily sees all other Men and all human Affairs are liable to. He who is in perfect Health to Day, may to Morrow be confin'd to a Bed of Sickness,
from

from whence he may never rise again ; and what may befall another, may befall me. He, who has now more Wealth than he can use, can't tell how soon he may be reduc'd to the extremest Poverty ; and therefore 'tis a Folly for any Man, how wealthy soever, to *trust in uncertain Riches*, which, as the *wise Man* says, *make themselves Wings and fly away*. And the like may be said of worldly Honour and Greatness, or whatever else conduces either to the real or imaginary Happiness of this present Life. Every thing here below is fickle, and uncertain, and transient ; and therefore for a Man to flatter himself that he shall always certainly continue in the same State of Prosperity which he is in at present, is as unreasonable an Expectation as it would be to presume, that the Wind shall always continue in the same Corner. For *Man is born unto Trouble, as the Sparks fly upwards* ; as 'tis said, *Job v. 7.*

You have read in the Book of *Esther* the Story of *Haman*, the prime Favourite of the great King *Abasuerus*, whom the fame

same Sun beheld' feasting with the King and Queen alone at a royal Banquet, and hanging on a Gibbet. And as sudden, and almost as great, was the Change of *Job's Condition*; in the Morning bless'd with ten hopeful Children, possess'd of seven thousand Sheep, three thousand Camels, five hundred Yoke of Oxen, five hundred She-Asses, and a very great Household, so that he was then the greatest of all the Men of the *East*; and in the Evening deprived of all, and stripped as naked as he came from his Mother's Womb; and within a very little while after full of sore and noisome Boiles, and scraping himself with a Potsherd upon a Dunghil. Here we have an Example in *Haman* of a very bad, in *Job* of a very good Man, both alike falling in almost an Instant of Time, from the Top of worldly Greatness, to the lowest Degree of Poverty and Contempt. In such Uncertainty therefore of all human Affairs, it can't be any Man's Duty to be secure of what he enjoys, or to presume that this State is unalterable. Nay farther,

(2.) Such

(2.) Such Security is so far from being a Duty, that it is a very great Fault, and what we are in Scripture particularly warn'd against. *Charge them that are rich in this World*, says the *Apostle*, *I Tim. vi. 17.* *that they — trust not in uncertain Riches, but in the living God.* And the Pride and Security of some wicked Men in the holy *Psalmist's* Time, is mention'd by him in the xth *Psalm*, as a great Aggravation of their Wickedness. *His Ways are always grievous; thy Judgments are far above out of his Sight; and as for all his Enemies he puffeth at them*, *ÿ. 5.* i. e. he is so confident of his own Wit and Strength, that he never dreams of meeting with any Change in his Fortune, or Disappointment in his Designs. *He hath said in his Heart, I shall never be moved. I shall never be in Adversity*, *ÿ. 6.* Moreover,

(3.) Such Security, such Presumption, and Confidence of the Fixedness and Immutability of our present worldly State,
has

has very often engag'd God to convince Men of their Vanity and Mistake, by making them Examples both to themselves and others, of the Fickleness and Uncertainty of all worldly Enjoyments. *When Men say Peace and Safety, then, as the Apostle observes, 1 Thess. v. 3. sudden Destruction cometh upon them.* The rich Man in the Gospel, *Luke xii. 16, &c.* who had fill'd his Barns, and laid up Goods for many Years, might probably have liv'd longer to enjoy them, if he had not foolishly promis'd himself such a sure and lasting Possession of them : but when he was too confident and secure, and thought himself out of the Reach of Fortune, God thought fit to shew him the Vanity of such Security, by summoning his Soul that very Night into another World ; *And then, says God, whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ? v. 20.* And when the holy *Psalmist*, after the end of his War with the House of *Saul*, thought himself now in so secure a Possession of the Throne, that there was no manner of Danger of any farther Trouble,

when

when he had said in his *Prosperity*, *I shall never be moved, thou, Lord, of thy Goodness hast made my Hill so strong!* No sooner had he said the Words but he was convinc'd of the Vanity of that his Presumption, for God bid his Face, and he was troubled, as 'tis said *Psal. xxx. 7.* God was pleas'd to instruct him thereby, by what Tenure it was that he held his Peace and Prosperity, *viz.* merely by God's continued Favour and Bounty, not by his own Strength, not by any Certainty or Immutability in the Nature of Things.

(4.) Lastly; As this vain Security and Confidence of the Unalterableness of our present State, is a likely Means to cause a sudden Change, so is it apt to render any such Change of our Condition for the worse, much more grievous and intolerable than otherwise it would be; partly because whatever Calamity befals us, while we are thus secure and confident, must needs be very sudden and surprizing, and it is a very great Addition to the Grievous-

ness of any Evil or Calamity, if it comes upon us unexpectedly, when we think our selves secure, when we do not so much as dream that any such Calamity is either likely, or so much as possible to befall us; partly because whenever any Evil comes upon us^a unexpectedly, it finds us unprovided to bear it, and also renders us incapable of using our Reason, either to furnish our Minds with such wise Considerations as might help us to sustain it, or to find out and put in Execution the probable Means of delivering our selves from it.

'Tis good Advice therefore to all Men, even when they are most in Health and Safety, and in the most^b flourishing and prosperous

^a *Incertum quid agam, quia præter spem, atque incredibile hoc mihi obtigit.*

Ita sum irritatus, animum ut nequeam ad cogitandum instituere. *Terent. Phorm. Att. Sc. 9, 10.*

^b *Quamobrem omnes; cum secundæ res sunt maximè tum maximè*

Meditari secum oportet, quo pacto adversam ærumnam ferant.

Pericla, damna, exilia peregrè rediens semper cogitet,

prosperous Condition, often to consider of the Uncertainty and Mutability of their State; that tho' they are now rich, they may be poor; that tho' they are now in health, they may be sick; that tho' they are now honourable, they may be despis'd; that tho' they are now compass'd about with many loving Friends and Relations, they may very soon be left quite desolate, or those Friends may turn to be their Enemies. *Communia esse hæc*; that these are such ill Accidents as are common to Men, such as have befallen many, and such as may befall any Man. Because that when a Man has us'd himself to such Thoughts and Meditations as these, nothing new or unexpected can ever befall him. When he has enur'd himself to the Contemplation of the Vanity and Uncertainty of all worldly Enjoyments, no ill Accident will ever amaze or surprise him. When he returns

Aut filii peccatum, aut uxor's mortem, aut morbum
filiæ :

Communia esse hæc; fieri posse; ut ne quid animo
sit novum :

Quidquid præter spem eveniat, omne id deputare es-
se in lucro.

Ib. ut sup. v. 11, 12, &c.

home after a Journey, and is welcom'd with the sad News of the Death of a Friend, or the Miscarriage of a Relation, or some great Loss which has befallen him in his Estate, he will not be at all astonish'd, tho' he may be griev'd to hear it; because it was no more than he knew might happen, 'twas no more than might have happen'd much sooner. If a Man be told that a Glass or an earthen Vessel is broken, he may be concern'd a little for the Loss, but he won't wonder at all at the Accident, *viz.* that a brittle thing should be broken; and he will no more wonder at it that a mortal Man is dead, for 'tis no more than what may at any time be look'd for; or that a Ship is cast away, for he knew when he sent it out that it might miscarry; or that a House is burnt, for he knew that it was built of combustible Materials. And on the other side, if things do not happen so ill as they might have done, his daily Escapes will be a fresh Ground of daily Rejoycing, and he will receive the Continuance of his prosperous State as a new Blessing, and with the same Gladness

of

of Mind, which he would have done a Deliverance from some sore Calamity. This is the first thing ; when our *Saviour* bids us to *take no Thought for the Morrow*, i. e. not to be over-concern'd and sollicitous about future Events, it was not his Intention to make Men secure, and confident of the Continuance of their present Enjoyments. Neither,

2. Was it his Meaning hereby to forbid Men to make use of their Eyes to see before them, or to make a Judgment by the Skill which they may have gotten, either from their own Observation, or the Histories of past Times, what evil Events are likely to happen. 'Tis a prudent Way of Reasoning thus ; such and such Causes have usually produc'd such and such Effects; if therefore these Causes are now visibly in being, it is probable enough that the same Effects will follow. So when a Man sees the Clouds gathering from all the Quarters of Heaven, and the Air on a sudden grow thick and dark, he can't but conclude that a Storm is likely to ensue ; tho' after all,

'tis possible, that one Wind may so overpower the rest as to disperse or carry off the Vapours, so that the Sky may clear up, and the Sun break forth again. But yet nevertheless, because contrary Winds, and a sudden Blackness do use to portend a Storm, no wise Man could have concluded otherwise but that a Storm was probable; and no wise Man, in such a probable Danger of a Storm, but would have provided as well as he could against it. And therefore I add farther in the third Place,

3. That when we are forbidden to be thoughtful against the Morrow, we are not so to understand these Words, as if it were our Duty to be altogether careless and unconcern'd, when we see, as we think, any Evil coming to us; neither are we forbidden to use all lawful and prudent Means to avert those Evils which are otherwise likely to happen, but may possibly by our prudent Foresight and honest Diligence be prevented, or to preserve and keep our selves unhurt by those Evils,
whose

whose coming we can't altogether hinder. *A prudent Man, (says Solomon, Prov. xxii. 3.) foreseeth the Evil, and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished.* Neither,

4. Lastly; are we to think that our Saviour hereby intended to forbid us to arm and provide our selves, either in general against any Evil which may possibly befall us, whether Poverty or Disgrace, Pain or Sickness, Loss of Goods, or the Death of Friends, or any the like evil Accident; or in particular against those Calamities which we foresee are probable to come upon us: for, on the contrary, a great part of his holy Gospel is spent in giving us Rules and Directions preparatory to Affliction; such are, in particular, all the Precepts of Patience, Self-denial, taking up the Cross, Resignation to God's Will, contempt of this World, and the like; which Precepts we ought to learn beforehand, even when we are in the most prosperous and flourishing Condition, and in no probable Danger of any

Calamity; that so the evil Day of Adversity and Affliction may never come upon us suddenly, nor find us unprovided. But especially when we have a foresight of any particular Evil, which is very likely to befall us, and which can't by any lawful Means which we can use be prevented, it is then (I say more especially) both our Duty and our Prudence, to fortify our Minds beforehand by wise and religious Considerations, that we may not be overwhelm'd and cast down by it when it happens, but may be able to bear it like Men and like Christians. Such Instances of Thoughtfulness concerning the Future, or *for the Morrow*, as these which I have now mention'd, it was not, I suppose, our Saviour's Design to prohibit in these Words: *Take no Thought for the Morrow.*

I proceed now in the second place,

II. To shew, what Thoughtfulness about any worldly Evils which may befall us hereafter, is unreasonable and unlawful.

And

And I suppose that all which our *Saviour* here meant to forbid, all, I think, which right Reason condemns in this Affair, is an excessive Fear of, or Concern about such future Evils; and then our Fear of them, or Concern about them, is unreasonable and excessive, 1. When it exceeds our Faith: 2. When it puts us upon using any unlawful or unwarrantable Means to prevent them: And, 3. When it does as much disquiet and discompose our Minds, and make us as uneasy, as if the Evil which we fear were actually present.

1. Our Fear of any future worldly Evil is unreasonable and excessive, when our Fear exceeds our Faith; that is, when we think the Evil we are afraid of is so certain and unavoidable, that God Almighty himself is not able to hinder it; or when we think it would be so grievous and intolerable, that God Almighty either cannot, or will not, enable us to support it. The first argues a Distrust of God's Power and Providence; the second implies a Dis-
belief

belief of his Goodness, or of the Truth of his Promises.

Of the first of these we have a remarkable Instance in the viith Chapter of the ii^d Book of Kings. When there had been a long and grievous Famine in *Samaria*, insomuch that Women were forc'd to eat their own Children, and there was great Reason to fear that it would every Day increase, because they were closely besieged by a very great Army, and there was no arm'd Force in readiness to relieve them; *Elisha* prophesied in the Name of the Lord, that the very next Day there should be as great Plenty of all sorts of Provisions, as there had been before a Scarcity; nay, says *a Lord, on whose Hand the King leaned*, that can't be; if God should make Windows in Heaven, and rain down Provision, it is impossible it should be so cheap and plentiful as you have said; the Prophecy was so strange and so unlikely to come to pass, that he could not believe that God himself was able to make it good.

Now

Now, I say, when our Fear of any temporal Evil is so great, as to make us give over our Trust in God's Providence, it is very unreasonable, because there is nothing which can be too hard for God, a Being of infinite Strength and Power, and whom no Creature is able to resist; and it is excessive, because it puts us besides our Duty, and makes us cease our Dependence upon him, *on whom* we are commanded to *cast all our Care*, because *he careth for us*; and who has given us in all Ages abundant Proofs of his Care and Protection over Men, in the remarkable Deliverances which he has given to his faithful Servants from those Evils which seem'd inevitably coming upon them: a very memorable Example of which we have in the Book of *Esther*, in the Deliverance of the *Jews* from the Destruction which was contriv'd against them by *Haman*, at the time when his malicious Project was just upon the Point of being put in Execution.

And so likewise, when we apprehend the Evil which we are afraid of to be so grievous

grievous and intolerable, that we think it impossible that we should be able to bear it, then our Fear of it is unreasonable, and exceeds the just Measures; because God has assur'd us, and he is *faithful* to all his Promises, that he *wilt not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.* And there can be no Reason to distrust either his Power or Goodness, or to question the Truth of his Promise, which he has so abundantly made good to his Servants in all Ages.

You have heard of the Patience of Job under the severest Afflictions, and those accompanied with the most aggravating Circumstances; for from the greatest Plenty and Prosperity he was reduc'd to the extremest Misery, and (not now to mention all the Particulars of it) suffer'd both in his Body, in his Relations, and in his Estate, the severest and most grievous Afflictions which the Subtlety and Malice of the Devil himself could invent, who by God's special Permission was suffer'd to do

do him all the Hurt he could: and these Afflictions came upon him, when he had no Reason to fear or suspect them; and they came also upon him so quick one after another, that he had no Space of Time to recollect himself; for no sooner had one Messenger finish'd his sad Story, but he was follow'd close at the Heels by another, the Messenger of a fadder; and while the second was yet speaking, there comes in a third, with a still more lamentable Relation; and immediately after him a fourth, with the saddest Message of all, the Death of all his Children, by the Fall of an House upon their Heads. These were sore Trials indeed, and such as it might well be thought human Nature could not but sink under. And yet when all these Messengers had related their several Stories, and the good Man perceived himself, of the happiest to be become in almost a Moment of Time the most miserable and afflicted Person upon Earth, the worst Words which the Sense of his most miserable Condition did extort from him were these; *the Lord gave, and the Lord*

Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.

You have heard, moreover, I suppose, of the Patience and Constancy of the *Apostles*, and other primitive Saints and Martyrs, under the severest Persecutions; for they had Trials of cruel Mockings and Scourgings; yea, moreover of Bonds and Imprisonments; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the Sword, were burn'd alive, were torn in pieces by wild Beasts; in short, they suffer'd all the Torments which the Malice of cruel Men and Devils could think of; and they suffer'd them all patiently and meekly, without Shrieks or Groans, without any Tokens of Anger or Impatience. Nay even the Women and the Children, scarcely grown up to Youth, were as forward to undergo, and did endure with as much Patience and Courage as the stoutest Men, whatever Torments their cruel Persecutors were pleas'd to inflict.

Now if God could, if in fact he did, enable these Persons to bear patiently and without

without lamentable Complaints, such Cruelties as human Nature, not assisted by Strength from above, must necessarily have sunk under, why should we doubt either of his Power or Readiness to afford us the like Strength and Courage, to enable us to bear any Affliction which he shall please at any time to lay upon us ? And if he can support Men under such Afflictions as these, much rather may we trust, that he will empower us to bear any of those Calamities which are common to Men, and not so very terrible to our present Apprehensions ; such as Poverty and Disgrace, Pain and Sickness, temporal Losses, or the Death of Friends, and the like ; and therefore we ought not to be unreasonably and unmeasurably terrified by the Foresight and Pre-apprehension of any such things. But,

2. Then our Fear of any temporal Evil and Calamity, which may possibly befall us is unreasonable and excessive, when it puts us upon using any unlawful and unwarrantable

warrantable Means to prevent its coming upon us ; for,

First of all , such a Fear of any future worldly Calamity as engages us in any evil Act to prevent it, does plainly imply a Disbelief of God's over-ruling Providence. For if we did believe (what we are abundantly assur'd of in the holy Scripture) that no Evil or Calamity does or ever can befall any Man unknown to God ; nay, that nothing does ever happen to any of us by Chance, but always by his special Order or Permission ; for *Affliction cometh not forth out of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground*, Job. v. 6. and the Prophet assures us, *Amos* iii. 6. that *there is no Evil in the City which the Lord hath not done* ; and our Saviour says, that *not a Sparrow falls to the Ground without him* ; and that *the very Hairs of the Head are numbed*. And accordingly holy Job (tho' part of his Affliction was immediately caused by the Villany of Men , as the driving away of his Cattel, and the Slaughter of his Ser-

vants

vants by the *Sabeans* and *Chaldeans*; part, seemingly, by the more immediate Hand of God; *the Fire of God*, says the Messenger, *is fallen from Heaven, and hath burnt up the Sheep and the Servants*; part, by what we usually call Chance or Accident, as the Death of his Sons and Daughters by the Fall of an House upon their Heads; yet) ascribes the whole of his Affliction, all that ever he suffer'd, to God's over-ruling Providence, *the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away*; (if, I say, we did believe that nothing does ever befall us but by God's Providence) and moreover, that he never sends any Affliction upon Men but for some very good Reason, either for the Trial of their Faith, or the Punishment of their Sins; we could not think the Commission of any Sin a likely Means to hinder any Evil that we fear is coming upon us: but rather, at such a time, we should be more than ordinarily afraid of doing any thing which might anger and displease him; we should be then more especially careful to avoid all manner of Sin, because the

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increasing of our Guilt by the Addition of any new Iniquity must needs be a more likely means to hasten and ascertain the Evil which we fear, than to prevent it.

Besides; such a Fear of any future Evil as engages us in any sinfull Practice to prevent or avoid it, plainly argues a Distrust of God's infinite Power: for if we thought him of sufficient Ability to preserve us from it, we should not seek to the Devil, his greatest Enemy, for Help and Deliverance; but rather, as the *Apostle* exhorts, *in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, let our Request be made known unto God,* and trust to him (whose Wisdom and Power do infinitely exceed our Conceptions of them) to find out some Expedient for our Safety, and to deal with us, and do for us as seemeth him good.

Again; such a Dread of any Calamity which can befall us in this World, as puts us upon using any unlawful Means to hinder it from coming upon us, is most highly unreasonable; because Sin is the greatest Evil in the World, and what we ought

in

in reason to be more afraid of than any thing besides ; and nothing can be more foolish than to chuse a greater Evil to avoid a less. But for a Man to fear a little Pain or Sickness, Loss or Trouble, or even Death it self, and not to fear eternal Damnation much more ; for a Man to chuse this, that he may avoid any of those, is the same (or rather infinitely greater) Madness that it would be to fear a slight Scratch in the upper Skin more than a mortal Wound in the Heart, or to drink a Cup of deadly Poyson to prevent a future Thirst. But,

3. Lastly ; then our Fear of any temporal Evil which may come upon us to Morrow, or at any Time hereafter, exceeds the just Bounds which both Reason and Religion have set to this Passion , when it puts us to a present Pain ; when we do not only *fear*, but do also, in a manner, *feel* those Evils and Calamities, which are not yet come, and which perhaps may never come upon us ; when we are so disturb'd, and so put out of Order

I 2 by

by a Foresight of future Miseries ; and our Spirits are so overwhelm'd, and cast down by a Pre-apprehension of what we may suffer, to Morrow, or the next Week, or Year, that we are able to take no Pleasure or Comfort in the Enjoyment of those Blessings, which the Bounty and good Providence of God affords us for our present Ease and Delight.

For what a palpable Folly and Madness is it, needlesly, to no Purpose, and for no Good, thus to disquiet and torment our selves ? For, as what is present is not the proper Object of Fear, we cease to fear when we actually feel an Evil ; so what is absent, what is not yet come, what perhaps may never come, can't be a just Ground of present Pain and Disquiet, because as yet it has no Being. And yet this is the Folly and Misery of Mankind, whom God has endued with Reason, that they might be the happiest of all his Creatures ; and they make use of this Reason chiefly to vex and torment themselves, and so render themselves the most unhappy and miserable Part of the whole Creation.

Creation. For other Creatures not being able to reflect on the Past, or to contemplate the Future, enjoy with Comfort that Portion of good things, which the kind Providence of God has allotted to them; and when they are at any time in Pain and Trouble, they endure every Moment only the Pain and Trouble of the present Moment. They fear no Sickness till it seizes them; and tho' while it is upon them they groan and howl, yet as soon as it is over they forget it again, and are as easy and happy as they were before: but we, to whom God has given Reason to enable us to bear, without any bitter Groans or sad Complaints, whatever Evils shall befall us, instead of thereby easing, do only increase our Pain; we draw upon our selves now, by our own dismal Fears and Apprehensions, Evils which perhaps would never have come, at least not till many Years hence; and the Pain which we endure while we fear, is oftentimes greater than the Pain it self when it comes. We are afraid such Evils will befall us, and by our Fears we pull

them down upon our own Heads ; we draw towards us, and hasten on that sorrow which we would avoid ; we anticipate that Misery which yet we think will be too grievous to be born ; and are as much disturb'd and uneasy before it comes, as we shall be when it is come upon us. Nay oftentimes (as I said) the Pain of Fear is greater than the Pain of the Evil it self; because by our Fears we feel all that Pain at once which will come upon us only by degrees, and between every Part of which there may be long Intervals of Comfort ; and, moreover, we endure all this very often, over and over again, before it comes, which will be really present but once ; and yet this Anticipation does not prevent its coming, or render us easier under it when it is present ; and as soon as one Evil is gone and past, we commonly begin to trouble and vex our selves with the Fear and Fore-sight of another.

And this is what our *Saviour* seems more especially to have design'd to prohibit in this place, where he bids us not
to

to be careful and anxious against the Morrow; because, says he, *the Morrow shall take Thought for the things of it self; sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.* That is, the Misery of human Life is of it self sufficiently great, you shall not need therefore to add to it, and increase it, by your own Fancies and Imaginations; and it will come upon you soon enough: you shall not need therefore to hasten it by your Fears; and when it is come, you can't chuse but be uneasy; why then should you be uneasy both now and then too? Will it not be sufficient to be pain'd and disturb'd when the Evil is present, but must you needs be in Pain when it is not present too? What is Folly and Madness, if this be not?

And this should lead me to the third thing which I proposed to do in speaking to these Words, which was to represent to you the Vanity and Unreasonableness of such Fear and Disquietude about our future State and Condition in this World, as was here meant to be forbidden; but I must defer this to another Time.

THE
UNREASONABLENESS
AND
REMEDIES
OF
ANXIETY.

UNIVERSALIS

AND

REMEDIES

У ТЕХНИКИ



DISCOURSE LXIX.

The Unreasonableness and Remedies of Anxiety.

MATT. vi. 34.

Take therefore no Thought for the Morrow ; for the Morrow shall take Thought for the Things of it self ; sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.



THESE Words (as I have formerly observ'd) may be interpreted in two Senses ; for—

i. Take

1. *Take no Thought*, may be understood in the same Sense here in which the same Phrase had been used in the 25th and 31st Verses; and then the Rule, or Advice in the Text, will be the same in Sense with what had been there given; *viz.* that we should not be over careful and sollicitous about the Means of our future Subsistence in this World; *take no Thought for the Morrow, what ye shall eat, and drink, and put on.*

Or else, 2. we may understand the Words thus; *take no Thought for the Morrow*; *i. e.* be not fearful now of what may perhaps befall you to Morrow; be not disturb'd and disquieted beforehand, with the Thought of any temporal Evil, Hunger, Thirst, Nakedness, or any thing else which may come upon you at any time hereafter.

And this last Sense of the Words, besides that it is very apposite to what our *Saviour* had been discoursing of before, because it removes the very Foundation
of

of Mens extreme Sollicitude in providing for the Future, seems also more agreeable than the former to those Reasons by which our Saviour here backs his Advice, *for the Morrow shall take Thought for the things of it self; and sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.* For the Morrow shall take Thought for the things of it self; that is, when any Evil does befall you, then indeed you can't chuse but be in some measure pain'd and disquieted, according to the Grievousness of it; but it is too much to be troubled both now and then too, both when the Evil is present, and when it is not present; for *sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof:* that is, you will be wretched enough when the Evil which you fear is come upon you, therefore why should you anticipate your Misery? Why should you torment your selves before the time? Why should you be more miserable than needs must?

And this is the Sense of the Words wherein I propounded to discourse of them; only (as I said) I would not confine

fine my self just to those Particulars which our *Saviour* seems here more especially to have referr'd to, viz. the Fear of Hunger, Thirst and Nakedness, or temporal Want; but shall endeavour to shew more generally, the Folly and Unreasonableness of vexing and disquieting our selves before-hand with unnecessary Fears and dismal Pre-apprehensions of any sort of Evil or Calamity whatsoever, to which Men are liable while they continue in this World. *Take no Thought for the Morrow.*

And I have already propounded to do these four things.

I. To shew what Thoughtfulness about the Future was not meant to be here forbidden.

II. To shew what Thoughtfulness about the Evils which may befall us hereafter is unlawful and unreasonable.

III. To represent to you the Vanity and Unreasonableness of such Fearfulness
and

and Concern about our future State in this World as is here forbidden. And,

IV. Lastly ; to propose some Remedies for the Cure of it.

And the two first of these I have already done ; what I am next to do, is

III. To represent to you the Vanity and Unreasonablenes of such Fearfulness and Concern about our future State in this World as is here forbidden ; that is especially of being so disturb'd and disquieted by such Fears, as not to be able to take Comfort in our present Enjoyments.

It is good for a Man to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the Good of all his Labour that he taketh under the Sun all the Days of his Life which God giveth him ; for it is his Portion. Every Man also to whom God has given Riches and Wealth, and has given him Power to eat thereof, and to take his Portion, and to rejoice in his Labour, this is the Gift of God. So says Solomon, Eccles. v.18, 19. But, on the other side, to be perpetually disqui-

disquieting our selves with unreasonable and ungrounded Fears, to be ever in Anxiety about our future State and Condition in this World, to be always boding the worst, and aggravating in our Imaginations every worldly Evil which may possibly befall us, this, I say, is unaccountable Vanity and Madness. For,

1. If the Evil which we have a Prospect of be small and trifling, there is not sufficient Ground to be much troubled and disquieted about it before-hand ; for why should a Man be excessively afraid of that, which, if ever it should befall him, will not be very painful and grievous to be born ? Why should he be out of measure disturb'd, by the Foresight and Pre-apprehension of an Evil, which when it is actually present will not much disturb and disquiet him ? But now many, nay (I believe I may say) most of the Evils which Men are so dismally afraid of, and with the Imagination and Pre-apprehension whereof they torment themselves, and render their whole Life uneasy and uncomfortable

comfortable, are of this nature; they are generally small and trifling Evils, and (as I shall shew hereafter) nothing near so terrible and grievous in themselves, as they are in the Idea and Contemplation: For, as *Epictetus* truly observes, 'tis not the thing it self which generally disturbs and affrights Men, but the false Notion and Opinion which they have of it; they judge it to be a great Evil when it is not, or to be a much more grievous Evil than it really is. Just as a fearful Man, when he is travelling in the Night, and sees (as he thinks) a Person in the Road making towards him of a gigantick Proportion, and arm'd with all the Instruments of Death, starts aside, and turns about to flee away, and has scarce Courage enough to look back to see whether he be pur-su'd or no; because he takes it for granted, that the Person whom his fearful Imagination had dress'd up so formidably could have no other Design but to rob at least, if not to kill him; wheras indeed if he had kept boldly on his Way he would have found this terrible *Mormo*, which he

was so horribly afraid of, to have been only a Bush or a Tree, or perhaps a Shadow. But,

2. Suppose we are not mistaken in the Nature of that Evil which we have a Prospect of, but that it is indeed very sore and grievous, and such as when it does come upon us must needs make us uneasy: yet, I say, nevertheless it is very foolish and unreasonable to be out of measure disturb'd and disquieted before-hand by a fearful Apprehension of it. For this is certain, that when such an Evil is actually come upon us, it will not be a whit the less grievous and troublesom, because we fear'd it so much before; I say, our pass'd Anxiety and Disquietude, while we did contemplate it as coming, will not then when it is come in the least mitigate or assuage our present Pain. So that 'tis evident, that such Anxiety and Disquietude about it before-hand is at least altogether vain and to no purpose. But that's not all;

For

For if Fear it self be a troublesome and painful Passion, as I suppose every one who knows what it is will readily grant it to be, it is moreover evident, that by excessively fearing any Calamity which may hereafter befall us, we do only render our selves more unhappy than the Evil alone would have made us, and make a voluntary Addition to our own Misery; for tho' we could not chuse but be miserable when the Evil came, we needed not to have been miserable till then. And I think 'tis not possible to conceive any more notorious Instance of Folly than this; because the Calamity it self will be very grievous, therefore to make it more grievous; because of it self, and by the Course of things, it will come soon enough, sooner than we could have wish'd, therefore to begin our Pain presently, and not to take that Respite which we might have had; because we see we can't always be at ease and quiet, but that something will fall out to disturb our Tranquillity, therefore not to be at ease and quiet, when and whilst we may: this is the very Ar-

K 2 argument

gument by which the Vanity and Folly
of such Fears are demonstrated in the
Text; *take no Thought for the Morrow,*
for sufficient unto the Day is the Evil
thereof. And after all,

3. Perhaps what we fear is only pos-
sible, a thing that may indeed happen,
but which is not at all likely to come to
pass: now if so, it is plainly very un-
reasonable to be much disquieted before-
hand by the Thought of it; for if it be
only possible to fall out, it is more pro-
bable that it will not; so that there is
manifestly greater Ground for Hope than
for Fear: and when we torment our selves
with the Fear of a barely possible Evil,
we voluntarily endure a certain Pain at
present, when what causes our Pain is an
Event which is never like to happen.

Besides, if it be reasonable to fear any
Evil which is barely possible, by the same
Reason we should do wisely always to live
in Fear of all possible Evils; and if we
should do so, we should never enjoy one
comfortable Moment in our whole Lives,
because

because we can never be secure against all possible Dangers. For no Man certainly was ever, to appearance, in less Danger of being knock'd on the Head than the Poet *Æschylus* was, when he sat all alone, on a clear Sun-shiny Day, in the middle of a large Field; and yet the Event shew'd that he was not then so safe, as he thought himself: for an Eagle, which at that time chanc'd to hover over him, mistaking his bald Head for a Stone, let fall a Shell-fish to be crack'd upon it, which by the Weight of its Fall broke thro' the poor Man's Skull. So that if we should be perpetually afraid of all the Evils then possible to befall us, and should act accordingly, we must neither stay at home nor go abroad, we must abide neither in the City nor in the Field, we must be neither upon the Land nor upon the Water; in a word, we must stay no where, we must move no whither, we must do nothing; for where-ever we stay, where-ever we go, or whatever we do, we are always in Danger of some Evil or other's befalling us: and if nothing else should,

our own Fears alone would certainly kill us in a very short time. But,

4. Suppose the Evil we are afraid of be not only very grievous, but also very probable, there is no good Reason however that we should be very melancholick, and disturb'd at present by the Fore-sight of it ; for an infinite Number of ver-y probable things have never come to pass, and 'tis possible this may not, 'tis uncertain whether it will or no. So that when we disquiet and torment our selves with the Fear of it, we put our selves to a present certain Pain, for fear of one that is future and uncertain.

And besides, our excessive Dread of any Calamity likely to befall us, is so far from being a probable means of averting it, that it is the most likely way to make it certain ; inasmuch as it hinders us from using our Reason freely, in finding out and judging fairly, by what means the Evil may probably be put by or avoided ; and also disables us from putting in Execution such Expedients, as our own

Reason

Reason or the Counsel of wise Men might suggest to us as likely means of our Safety: for when a Man is in a great Consternation by reason of an imminent Danger, he neither is able to see his Way to escape, nor, if it be shew'd him, is he able to take it, but he stands still in an amaze till the Evil overtakes him; *fear being* (as the wise Hebrew observes, *Wisd. xvii. 12.*) *nothing else but a betraying of the Succours which Reason offers.* Nay not only so, but a great Dread and Consternation many times makes Men pull down upon themselves immediately those very Evils which they fear, and which perhaps otherwise would not have befallen them at all, at least not so soon. For so the rich Miser endures all his Life-time the real Inconveniences of Poverty, for fear that he should one Day come to Want; and many Men have died, and some have made away themselves for fear of dying. But,

5. Lastly; Admit the most that can be suppos'd, *viz.* that the Evil or Calamity,

with the Foresight whereof we are at any time disturb'd, is not only very grievous, but withal so certain too, that there is no possible means of escaping it, (tho', by the way, this can hardly be suppos'd concerning any Evil which can befall us in this Life, Death only excepted; the Providence of God having very often found out Ways for the Deliverance of Men from such imminent Dangers as to human Apprehension were altogether unavoidable; for hardly any thing can ever appear more certain than was the Destruction of the *Jews* in the Reign of King *Ahasuerus*, when the Royal Decree was gone forth for that purpose, and the very Day set, and that Day almost come; and yet the good Providence of God so order'd it, that on that very Day, instead of being destroyed themselves, they had Liberty given them to destroy all those Men who sought their Ruin. But, I say, admit the Supposition, *viz.* that the Pain or Calamity we are at any time afraid of, is both grievous and certain, yet, I say) 'twill be easy to shew the Vanity and Unreasonable-

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ness of being before-hand tormented and disquieted thereby.

For if it be suppos'd certain, then, 'tis plain, our Thoughtfulness will not prevent it; and if it be indeed grievous in it self, our Fore-taste of it cannot make it easy: and if it will do neither, then 'tis manifestly vain and to no purpose to disquiet our selves about it, but we had better set our Hearts at rest, and think as little of it as we can.

Moreover; if the Evil be both grievous and unavoidable, it is unreasonable and foolish to make a voluntary Addition to it; the Evil, when it comes, will be *sufficient*, and it will come soon enough, we shall not need therefore to begin it sooner, and make it greater.

But the wisest Course we can take in such a Case, is in the mean time to be fitting and preparing our selves to undergo what we can't avoid, by laying in a Stock of Comfort, and by furnishing our Minds before-hand with those wise Considerations which both Reason and Religion afford us, to enable us to endure, with Patience

tience at least, if not with some Measure of Chearfulness, whatever Affliction or Adversity may possibly befall us while we live in this World.

Thus I have endeavour'd to shew the Vanity and Unreasonableness of Men's disquieting and tormenting themselves, and making their Lives uncomfortable by the Foresight and Contemplation of any Evil which may befall them in this World, whether it be small or great, whether it be only possible, or very likely, or altogether certain and unavoidable; in all these Cases 'tis good Advice, *take no Thought for the Morrow, for the Morrow shall take Thought for the Things of it self, sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.* And this was the

III. Thing I propos'd to do.

But tho' this Advice may be acknowledg'd to be good and reasonable, it may be thought perhaps hardly practicable; because the Passion of Fear is natural, and a Man can't forbear being concern'd and discompos'd when he has a Prospect of any

ny fore Evil like to befall him ; altho' all the while his own Reason tells him, and he is fully satisfied in his Judgment, that his Fear will do him no good ; 'tis as natural for the Mind to fear an Evil foreseen, as 'tis for the Eye to wink when any thing is suddenly mov'd before it , and one might be as well forbidden as the other.

But for all this, I do not believe but that God has given our Reason Power to command and subdue our Passions, or that Fear is such an unruly and disorderly Passion that it can't be moderated and govern'd by Reason, or that there is any Man naturally of such a timorous Temper as that by right Reason and religious Considerations he may not be brought to be not very much concern'd about any thing that may befall him in this World ; but so as that after he has faithfully discharg'd his own Duty, and us'd all prudent and lawful Means for his own Safety and Welfare, he may be able to leave the Success to God, and to expect all future Events with great Calmness, and Evenness, and Indifferency of Spirit, and with perfect

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Resignation to the divine Will, saying, as old *Eli* did, when the Destruction of his whole Family had been foretold him by the Prophet *Samuel*, *it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* And this brings me to the fourth and last thing which I promis'd to do; *viz.*

IV. To shew by what Means this may be done; or to propose some Remedies for the Cure of unreasonable and troublesome Fears of any temporal Evil or Adversity, which may befall us while we are in this World. And,

I. First of all, it would do a great deal towards the curing of such Fears, and the begetting in Men a great Calmness and Evenness of Spirit, to learn them a true Notion of those things which they are generally most afraid of; which are either Disgrace, or Poverty, or Pain, or Death; some or other of these likely to befall either themselves, or some other Person whom they have a Kindness for. For to these four Heads I believe may be reduced
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all the worldly Evils which Men either feel or fear, which the Subtlety of the Devil or the Malice of wicked Men can inflict, and with the Foresight whereof Men are most apt to be disquieted.

Now tho' the *Stoicks* went certainly too far, when they affirm'd these or the like Evils to be things merely indifferent, and such as could not make a wise Man less happy than he would be otherwise; yet I believe it may be truly said, that they are not quite so great Evils as Men generally take them to be: but that what *Seneca* says in the Case is very true, that *we are generally more afraid than hurt, and are oftner disturb'd by our own false Opinion of things, than by any real Evil in the things themselves.* For,

(1.) What is Disgrace? I mean undeserved Disgrace? (for it is in our Power not to do any thing which may deserve it, and we shall not need to torment our selves with the Fear of what is in our own

* Plura sunt quæ nos terrent quam quæ premunt, & saepius opinione quam re laboramus.

Power to prevent. What, I say; is undeserved Disgrace) but the vain and false Opinion and Talk of a Company of ignorant and foolish People concerning us? And would it not be a greater Evil to be commended and applauded by such? Might we not, if we had the good Word of all such, reasonably think that we were like them, as vain and silly as they? And would not this be a much more reasonable Ground of inward Vexation and Distress to a wise Man, than it is to be spoken meanly of by such whose Judgment he has no cause to value, whose Commendations would be a more real Reproach? Again,

(2.) What is Poverty, with the Fear whereof a great many Men, who have not the least Reason to fear it, do greatly torment themselves? What is it, I say, but the paring away of some useless Superfluities? The Table, it may be, will not be so well spread as 'tis now, but still there may be enough to satisfy Nature, a little's enough for that; and then there will

will be less Danger of surfeiting, which destroys many more than Hunger and Want. The Fare, it may be, will not be so delicate and costly as now; but no great Matter for that, so long as it is as wholesom, so long as it nourishes as well. The Cloths, it may be, will not be so fine, and gay, and fashionable, as now; but however they may fit as close upon us, and keep us as warm. The House, it may be, will not be so large and well adorn'd as that we now live in; but the great Use of an House is to shelter from the Weather, and for that Purpose a less House or a worse furnish'd one may do as well. The Attendants, it may be, will not be so many as they now are; but then there will be less need of so many, and a few will be more easily kept in good Order. The necessary Provisions of Nature will not, it may be, come in so easily as now, will not be procur'd, it may be, without Sweat and Labour; but then this very Labour will create an Appetite which will give a better Relish, even to homely Fare, and make

make it digest much kindlier, than all the Arts of Cookery.

And now, after all, what is there in a low Condition of Life so very much to be fear'd? For that what has been said is not mere empty Speculation, and idle Talk, any Man may be soon satisfied by his own Observation. Do but deign to cast your Eyes a little upon those who are in that mean Condition which you are so horribly afraid of being reduc'd to; and see if they do not eat their Meat with as good an Appetite, whether they are not as free from Diseases, whether they do not live as long as other Men; see whether they do not sleep as soundly, whether they do not look as chearfully, whether they do not pass their Days as contentedly, whether they are not consequently in all Respects almost as happy, as they who have more, except only in the vain Opinion of the World. Nay, are they not in many Respects truly happier? generally not so greedy and ambitious, freer from Cares and Diseases, in less Danger of Violence

and

and Robbery, not so liable to be falsly accus'd or basely flatter'd? They know who are their Friends and whom they may trust, which the great and wealthy can never know; and in fine, (which is no small Advantage) they are free from the tormenting Fears of Poverty, being sure that they can't fall much lower than they are. And I believe indeed it would be a real Kindness to some covetous Men, who can't take any Comfort in what they have for fear of coming to want, if by the Providence of God they were brought a little nearer to this Scarecrow Poverty, that they might view it more clearly and distinctly; for then they would perceive, that 'tis not that formidable thing which it appeared to them to be when they beheld it at a greater Distance, and in a little time would learn to contemn what they have a long time so much dreaded.

(3.) In the next place; What is Pain? I will not say with the *Stoicks*, it is no Evil; or that a wise Man under a severe Fit of the Gout, or Stone, or Cholick,

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or tormented in Phalaris's Bull, may be able to say, *O quam dulce est? How pleasant and delightful is it to be thus tormented?* But yet this I may truly say, that no bodily Pain is so great an Evil, as that it should be reasonable to live our whole Life in a constant Pain for fear of it. For if it be small it may be easily born, it is not consequently worth being much afraid of; and if it be very sore and grievous, it can't be very long and lasting: for when Pain grows extremely violent it takes the Head, and stupifies the Senses, or it quickly ends in Death.

But this (it may be you'll say) is but small Comfort; for this same Death is the very *King of Terrors*; 'tis that which of all other things does most terrify and affright Men. But that's not now the Question, whether Men are generally afraid of it or no; but whether they have Reason to be so very much afraid of it as they are. Let us therefore,

(4.) Examine

(4.) Examine the thing calmly and without Prejudice; what is Death, *thro' the Fear whereof a great many Men are all their Life time subject unto Bondage?* What, I say, is Death; but the parting of two old Friends, or rather of two old Enemies, the Body and the Soul, which could never agree well together, which were always quarrelling and contending for the Mastery; *the Flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh,* as the Apostle speaks? What is Death, but the freeing of a pure, ethereal and heaven-born Soul from a Lump of Clay, to which it was unhappily united, and which very much hindred the free Exercise of its intellectual and rational Faculties? What is it to dye, but to become like Angels? To make an Escape out of a noysom Prison? To knock off our Chains and Fetters? To shake off that Weight which clogg'd us, and kept us down here in this lower World, and to fly up to the pure and celestial Region of Spirits? This is Death; and if this be a thing to be fear'd, what is there to be

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desir'd? And if Death be not this to all that dye, 'tis thro' their own Fault only, and because they are wanting to themselves; for it is in every Man's Power, thro' the Assistance of the divine Grace, to make Death a very good and desirable thing, the End of all Pain and Misery, and the Beginning of an endless Happiness. And therefore the *wise Man*, speaking of the Death of a good Person, in *Eccles.* vii. 1. says, that *the Day of Death is better than the Day of one's Birth.* But,

2. If we can't philosophize so much as to persuade our selves, that these Evils, incident to us in this mortal Life, are not such very dreadful things as Men generally apprehend them to be; Religion, however, may teach us (even while we retain the vulgar Notion concerning them) not to be unreasonably and excessively afraid of them; for thereby we are asfur'd of these following Particulars, which, if duly consider'd by us, will be sufficient to support our Spirits, to discharge all unrea-

unreasonable Fears, and to enable us, having been faithful in the Performance of our own Duty, to expect with very great Indifference the Event of things.

(1.) We are assur'd that God governs the World, and consequently that nothing does ever fall out unknown to him, nay, not without his special Order or Permission; and therefore seeing he is an infinitely wise and good Being, we may be sure that whatever does happen in the World is (all things considered) best, and what we our selves should perceive to be so if we were as wise as he.

(2.) We are farther assur'd, that in the Administration of the Affairs of this lower World, God has a peculiar Regard to and Care of Mankind; nay, that his watchful and powerful Providence extends to every individual Person in the whole World; for so our *Saviour* argues at the 26th and 28th Verses of this Chapter, where he calls upon us to contemplate the Providence of God, even towards the

Fowls of the Air and the Lillies of the Field; and are not ye, says he, much better than they? And in Chap. x. v. 29, &c. Are not two Sparrows sold for a Farthing, and not one of them shall fall to the Ground without your Father? But the very Hairs of your Head are all numbed: fear ye not therefore, ye are of more Value than many Sparrows.
Moreover,

(3.) We are also assur'd, that this powerful and wise Disposer of all things, has a true Love to every individual Man in the whole World; which, as he has abundantly manifested other ways, so especially has he done it by sending his own Son into the World, for the Redemption of all; or, as the *Apostle* says, *to taste Death for every Man*. And therefore from a Being so infinitely loving to us, we need not fear any thing which is hurtful; we may reasonably expect every thing which is for our Good. So the *Apostle* argues, *Rom. viii. 32. He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him*

*him up for us all, how shall he not with
him also freely give us all things?*

(4.) We are also plainly and particularly assur'd, that this wise and good Being, by whose Providence all things in this World are order'd, takes no Delight in putting Men to Grief and Pain, that he never afflicts but for some very good Reason; *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of Men, Lam. iii. 33.* Nay farther, that he never sends any Afflictions upon Men, but when mov'd thereto by his Fatherly Love and Kindness; and that the very Afflictions which he sends are an Argument thereof: for so the Apostle says, *Heb. xii. 6, 7. Whom the Lord loveth he chastneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastning, God dealeth with you as with Sons, for what Son is he whom the Father chastneth not?* And consequently that the temporal Afflictions, which we may possibly undergo, are not (how grievous soever) a reasonable Cause of Fear, but rather of Rejoicing. *My Brethren,*

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(says St. James, Ch. i. ¶. 2.) count it all Joy when ye fall into divers Temptations, knowing this, that the Trial of your Faith worketh Patience. And to the same purpose we are told by the Author to the Hebrews in the fore-cited Chapter, ¶. 11. that tho' no chastning for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness to them that are exercis'd thereby. From whence he makes this Inference at the 12th Verse; *Wherefore lift up the Hands which hang down, and the feeble Knees;* that is, let this Consideration of the Benefits and Advantages of Afflictions, and of the Fatherly Love of God in sending them upon Men, inspire you with Courage and Resolution, that you may neither be daunted by the Foresight, nor sink under the Weight of any temporal Adversity.

And indeed, when we consider all these things together, viz. that Almighty God, by whose wise and powerful Providence all things in this World are order'd, has a peculiar Care of Men, and bears to them

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a Fatherly Love and Kindness, and never chastens them but for their Good: we can have no just Reason to fear or be dismay'd, by the Fore-thought of any thing which may befall us; we can't but think our selves much safer under his Protection, than we should be if he was pleas'd to permit every Man to chuse for himself what State and Condition of Life he thought best: for 'tis certain we should not chuse so wisely; we should not deal so well by our selves as we may be sure he will, who knows what is good for us better than we do, and has promis'd to do what is best for all thema who are careful to please him. For *we know*, (says the *Apostle*, *Rom.* viii. 28. *i. e.* we may be confidently assur'd, of this) *that all things* (being order'd and dispos'd by God) *shall work together for Good to them that love him.* And therefore I add, in the third place,

3. That the best Remedy against the Fear of any Evil or Calamity which may befall us in this World is a good Conscience,

ence, to be obtain'd only by the constant Practice of all the Duties of an holy Life. For indeed so long as Men continue Enemies to God thro' wicked Works, they have very great Reason to be always afraid they can't, unless they grow blind and stupid and sottish, but live in a perpetual Fear and Dread. For *Wickedness*, as the wise Hebrew observes, *being condemn'd by her own Witness, is very timorous; and being press'd with Conscience, always forecasteth grievous things*, *Wisd.* xvii. 11. And so says *Eliphaz* in the Book of *Job*, Chap. xv. 20, &c. *The wicked Man travelleth with Pain all his Days, a dreadful Sound is ever in his Ears;* that is, even in Prosperity he does not think himself in Safety; *he believeth not that he shall return out of Darkness, and he is waited for of the Sword;* that is, “ when he lies down to sleep, “ he is afraid he shall be kill'd before “ Morning; and he dreams he is encompassed by naked Swords.” [Patrick in loc.] To which agrees that Saying of the wise Man, *Prov.* xxviii. i. *The Wicked*

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ed flee when no Man pursueth : an evil Conscience makes them so timorous, that they never think themselves out of Danger. But, on the other side, a good Man, he says, is not easily affrighted, a small Danger will not scare him ; and be the Danger never so great, he will be able, being embolden'd by Innocence and a good Conscience, not only quietly to expect it, but to go forth and meet it, with undaunted Courage ; the Wicked flee, when no Man pursueth ; but the Righteous is bold as a Lion. And great Reason indeed he has to be so, especially upon these two Accounts ;

(1.) Because God is his sure Friend ; *ye are my Friends, says our Saviour, when ye do what I command you.* And he, who has God for his Friend, has no Reason to be afraid of any Calamity, because no Evil can befall him but by God's special Permission ; he needs not be *afraid of any evil Tidings whose Heart is fixed trusting in the Lord.* In the most perillous Times and in the greatest Dangers he may be
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able to say with the holy *Psalmist*; *the Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, of whom then shall I be afraid?* Tho' an Host of Men should encamp against me, my Heart shall not fear; and tho' there rose up War against me, yet will I put my Trust in him. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the People that have set themselves against me round about. Nay, seeing he is my Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in Trouble, I will not fear tho' the Earth be removed, and tho' the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea; tho' the Waters thereof roar and be troubled, and tho' the Mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

(2.) Such an one can have no Reason to fear, or to be much concern'd about any thing that may happen to him in this World, because his main Concern is secur'd; so that tho' he may possibly meet

^a Si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinæ.
with

with contrary Winds, and tempestuous Weather, and a rough Sea, yet he is sure of coming at last to his desir'd Haven, if he holds on his Course with Patience; and the Foresight of that unspeakable Happiness which not long hence he shall enjoy, will make him not much regard, scarcely to be sensible of, those Difficulties which he meets with in his Passage to it; especially being moreover well assur'd that every Difficulty or Hardship which he meets with here will help to encrease his Happiness in the other World: according to that of the *Apostle*, in 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. *For which Cause we faint not, but tho' our outward Man perish, yet the inward Man is renewed Day by Day. For our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* But,

4. Lastly; If what has been already said be not sufficient to arm us against the Fear of any Affliction or Adversity which may befall us in this World, whether Poverty,

Poverty, or Disgrace; Pain, or Sickness, or even Death it self; there is still one Remedy left, which if duly apply'd will not fail to cure, even such as are most cowardly and timorous, of all unreasonable Fears of temporal Evils; that is, let them drive out one Fear by another, a less by a greater. Let them fear as much as ever they can; but then let 'em (as in reason they ought) fear that most which is most to be fear'd; let them fear God, and his Wrath, and that eternal Punishment which he will inflict upon all wicked Men, and then they can't be very much concern'd at those *light Afflictions which are but for a Moment.*

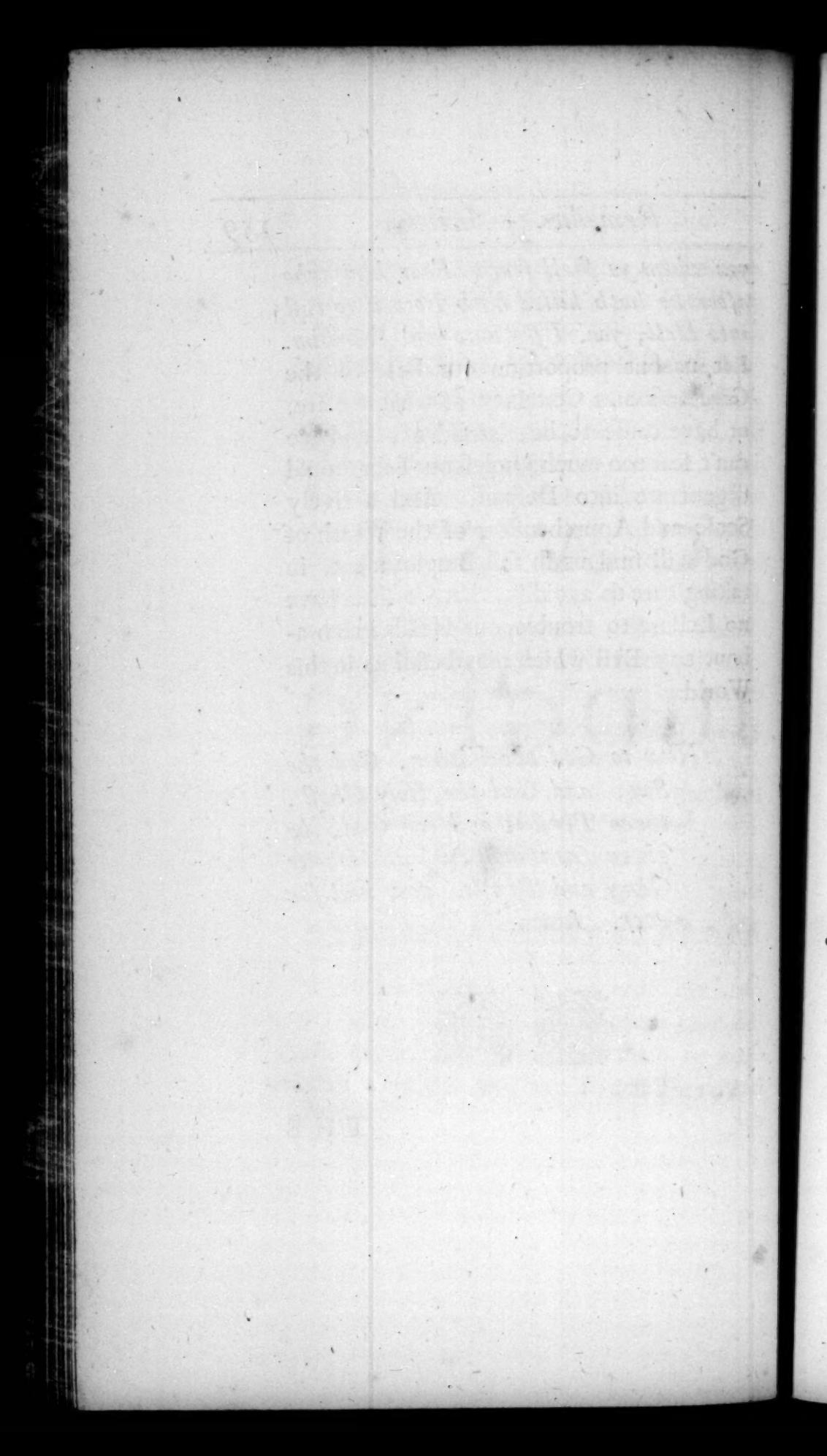
And this is the very Remedy which our *Saviour* prescrib'd to his *Apostles*, who were naturally of a very cowardly Temper; (*Luke* xii. 4.) where he begins his Discourse concerning the Hardships and Persecutions which they were like to suffer for his Sake with this Advice; *I say unto you, my Friends, be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you*

you whom ye shall fear; Fear him who after he hath killed hath Power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.
Let us but proportion our Fear to the Greatnes and Certainty of what we are, or have cause to be, afraid of, and we can't fear too much, unless our Fear should degenerate into Despair. And a lively Sense and Apprehension of the Wrath of God will find us so full Employment, in taking care to avoid it, that we shall have no Leisure to trouble our Heads much about any Evil which may befall us in this World.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be given (as is most due) all Honour Glory and Praise, now and for ever. Amen.



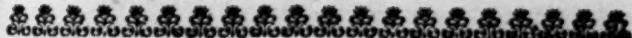
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Considered and Stated.

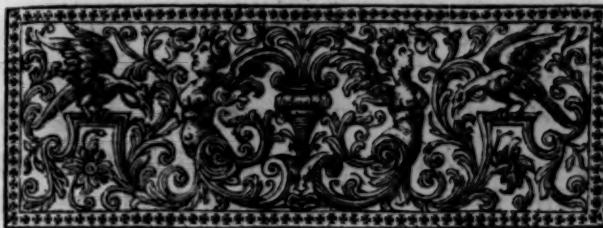


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DISCOURSE LXX.

The Case of Judging consider'd
and stated.

MATTH. vii. 1, 2.

*Judge not, that ye be not judged.
For with what Judgment ye judge,
ye shall be judged; and with
what Measure ye mete, it shall
be measured to you again.*

Have already gone thro' the two
former of the three Chapters,
wherein is contained our Lord's
Sermon on the Mount: I go on now to
the third, beginning with the Words which

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I have now read to you; which, as they are the beginning of a Chapter, so I conceive they are likewise the beginning of a new Subject, and have no Connexion with, or Dependence upon the foregoing Words in the former Chapter: so that in order to the right understanding of them we shall only need to consider the Meaning of the Words wherein the Precept is expressed, and the Force of the Reason whereby the Observation thereof is persuaded.

Now the proper Meaning of the Word *κρίνω*, here used, is truly expressed in our Translation, by the Word, *judge*; but then the *English* Word, *judge*, as well as the *Greek* Word, may be taken either in a good or in a bad Sense. For in Judging, that is, when we judge according to Truth, and when we have Warrant and Authority to judge, there is manifestly no Fault at all. But tho' the Word be capable of a good Sense, it is most commonly used in a bad one, where-ever in Scripture the Judgment of Men is spoken of; and without doubt our *Saviour* here meant

meant some ill thing by *judging*, when he so universally forbids it; *Judge not*. As may also farther appear from *Luke vi. 37*. where repeating this Precept, *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged*; he immediately adds as explicatory thereof, *Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned*.

But tho' the Prohibition be universal, it must yet necessarily be understood with some reasonable Restrictions and Limitations; and *judge not*, or *condemn not*, can signify no more than as if it had been said, *judge not*, or *condemn not*, without Reason, or without Authority to judge or condemn: for where we have Authority to judge, and when the Judgment which we give is according to Truth and Reason, 'tis not only allowable to judge, but in some Cases it is also our necessary Duty, as I shall shew by and by.

The Subject therefore of my Discourse upon these Words, shall be to shew,

I. When, and in what Cases, and upon what Occasions, and concerning what Things or Persons, we may, without Blame,

make or give our Judgment; that is, what Judging was not meant to be forbidden by our *Saviour* in these Words, *Judge not.*

II. To shew, what Judging is unlawful, and was certainly meant to be here forbidden by our *Saviour*.

III. I shall then by some general Arguments and Considerations shew, both the Sinfulness and Folly of such Judging of others as was meant here to be forbidden. And,

IV. Lastly, I shall propose some Remedies for the Prevention and Cure of that general Proneness which is in Men to judge and censure one another.

I. I shall shew, when, and in what Cases, and upon what Occasions, and concerning what Things or Persons, it is lawful for us to make or to give our Judgment: I say, to *make* or to *give* our Judgment; for the Word *νείναι*, comprehends both these. For we then judge, when we make a Judgment of any Thing or

or Person in our Minds; and we then also judge, when we declare our Judgment thereof to others.

Now that all kind of Judging, whether of Things or of Persons, was not meant to be here forbidden by our *Saviour* in this universal Prohibition of all Judging, is evident. For,

i. As to Things; that is, as to Matters of Truth and Falshood, or of Good or Evil, there is manifestly no Sin in making or declaring our Judgment thereof.

Nay so far is this from being sinful, that it is our Duty, it is that for which chiefly our Reason was given us by God, that we might discern between Truth and Falshood, and between Good and Evil, in order to our chusing and cleaving to the one, and to our shunning and avoiding the other. *Why even of your selves do ye not judge what is Right?* says our Saviour, Luke xii. 57. And that Precept of the Apostle, 1 Thess. v. 21. *Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good,* plainly implies, that it is our Duty, after we have carefully exa-

mined the Reasons on both sides of any controverted Opinion or Practice, then to form a wise and true Judgment thereof in our own Minds, and to believe and practise accordingly.

And when we have upon good Reasons formed a Judgment to our selves concerning any such Point, there is manifestly no Harm in declaring this our Judgment to others; nay this also is in many Cases what we are bound to do. Particularly, if the Opinion which upon good Grounds, as we conceive, we have found to be false, be also such as we believe will hazard the Salvation of those who hold it, by betraying them into some sinful Practice: or if the Practice which we condemn in our own Judgments be such, as we conceive will be damnable to those who allow themselves in it. But this Case is so manifestly not included in this Precept of our *Saviour*, *Judge not*, that, I suppose, I shall not need to spend any more time in the Proof of it. For the Judging which our *Saviour* here forbids, is plainly, the *Judging concerning the Persons or the Actions of Men.*

And

And yet neither was all such Judgment meant to be hereby forbidden; for,

2. 'Tis evident that it was not our *Saviour's* Intention hereby to forbid Men to judge of themselves, and to blame, and censure, and condemn their own Actions, whereinsoever they are conscious they have done amiss. For to do this, is so far from being a Fault, that it is a Duty, and a very good Means of Improvement in Virtue, and the way to escape the Punishment of God, justly due to us for our Sins; according to that of the *Apostle*, *1 Cor. xi. 31*. *If we would judge our selves, we should not be judged.* Where you see there is a Promise made to those that judge themselves, directly opposite to the Threatning here made to that Judgment which our *Saviour* here prohibits; *if ye judge, ye shall be judged*, says our *Saviour* here; but the *Apostle* says there, *if we judge our selves, we shall not be judged.* It is plain therefore, that the Judging which is here forbidden, is only the making or giving a Judgment, concerning

concerning the Persons or Actions of other Men.

And yet neither is all such Judging; that is, all Censuring or Blaming, or Condemning the Persons or Actions of others, altogether unlawful, or meant to be here forbidden. For—

3. 'Tis evident that our *Saviour* meant not hereby to forbid the judicial Proceedings of the Civil Magistrate; that is, his calling before him such as walk unruly and disorderly in their Stations; and examining into their Actions, and upon good Proof made of the Crimes they are charg'd with, condemning them to undergo such Punishment as their Crimes deserve. The absolute Necessity of such judicial Proceedings, in order to the Preservation of Peace and Justice among Men, makes it abundantly evident that it was not our *Saviour's* Design in these Words to forbid them.

Nay, on the other side, so far is such Judgment from being unlawful, that to those who are placed in Power and Authority,

thority, it is a necessary Duty ; and they would be failing in the Trust that is committed to them by God, if they should not, to the best of their Skill and Power, endeavour to preserve Peace and Justice among their Subjects, by inflicting deserved Punishment upon all those who walk disorderly within their Society ; and in order to which it is necessary, that they should first diligently enquire into their Behaviour, and pass a true Judgment thereupon. *The Powers that be, are ordained of God,* says the *Apostle, Rom. xiii. 1.* And, *¶ 3. Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the evil;* and, *¶ 4. He is the Minister of God to thee for good; if therefore thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the Sword in vain; for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth evil.*

And therefore this sort of Judgment, *i. e.* the Judgment of the Magistrate, is not properly the Judgment of Man, but the Judgment of God, whose Minister and Deputy the Magistrate is, as *Moses* tells the

the Judges in his time, Deut. i. 17. Hear the Causes between your Brethren, and judge righteously between every Man and his Brother—— and be not afraid of the Face of Man, for the Judgment is God's. The Sentence passed by the Magistrate upon Criminals, is God's Sentence; and the Punishment inflicted by the Magistrate upon the Disturbers of the publick Peace, is God's Punishment, inflicted by the Magistrate's Hand. And so *Jehosaphat* tells the Judges which he had appointed throughout all the Cities of *Judah*, 2 Chron. xix. 6. Take heed, says he, what you do, for ye judge not for Man but for the Lord, who is with you in Judgment. It is evident therefore, that this sort of Judgment was not here meant to be forbidden by our *Saviour*; the only Judgment which he intended to prohibit, was the Judgment of *private Persons*. And yet—

4. Neither was all private Judgment meant to be forbidden in this universal Prohibition; Judge not; for there are some

some Cases which right Reason teaches us, and which the holy Scripture it self warrants us to except out of it; particularly these Three.

(1.) Where both the Fact and the Crime are evident and notorious; for in this Case it is no Act of Uncharitableness, to condemn in our own Judgments that which God himself has plainly condemned. Charity indeed obliges us not to judge beyond what we see; but it does not oblige us not to see what is plain before our Eyes: neither does it oblige us, in Contradiction to our Senses and to right Reason, to judge him to be a sober Man whom we know to be a Drunkard; or him to be chaste, whose Incontinency is notorious; or him to be just, who practises his Injustice so openly, that all who see him must needs observe it. Charity covers all those Faults of others which can be covered, and which we are not obliged, either in Justice or Charity, to reveal; but if any Man practises his Wickedness so openly, as that he seems resolved

solved that all should take notice of it, no Charity can oblige us to go with our Eyes shut; and of what we cannot but see, we cannot but forme some Judgment in our Minds, either approving or condemning it. And therefore if the Fact be such as must and ought in right Reason to be condemned, it is so far from being our Duty to judge well of it, and to call it by a good Name, that 'tis a great Sin so to do, and against which a severe Woe is most deservedly pronounced by the Prophet, *Isaiah v. 20.* *Woe unto them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness; that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.*

(2.) It is not always an uncharitable Judgment of others, to suspect or fear worse of them than we see; I mean when the Reason of this Suspicion is not any ill Will towards them, but an hearty Desire of their Welfare and Happiness, and that we may caution and advise them to beware of those Snares of the *Devil*, which

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we fear they are in danger of. Thus a wise and good Father, tho' he knows not certainly any Ill in his Children, tho' he is not sure they have committed any Fault; yet if there be any Ground at all but to suspect it, is apt to suspect and fear the worst: not because he hates them, but because he loves them; because he has a tender Care of their Welfare. And therefore before he is sure that they take any ill Courses, if he only fears or suspects it, he takes occasion to admonish them beforehand to beware thereof, knowing that such an Admonition before, is more probable to do them good, than a Reproof or Correction afterwards; and that if it be as he fears and suspects, *i.e.* if they have indeed committed the Fault which he suspects and fears they have, it will be much easier to reclaim them by a gentle early Admonition, than it will be afterwards by a more severe Correction. Thus 'tis observed of *Job*, Ch. i. 5. that whenever his Sons and his Daughters had been feasting together, tho' he knew not certainly that their Mirth had been excessive

cessive or extravagant, yet fearing that it might have been so, he always sent and sanctified them, and rising up early in the Morning, offered Burnt-offerings according to the Number of them; for he said, *it may be that my Sons have sinned, and cursed God in their Hearts.* And thus St. Paul says of himself, 2 Cor. xi. 2. that he was jealous over the Corinthians with a godly Jealousy; that is, he was not uncharitably suspicious of them; he did not suspect worse of them than he had evident Ground for, out of Hatred or ill Will; but merely out of Tenderness and Love to them, and in order to warn and admonish them against such evil Practices as he fear'd they had been guilty of, or were in danger of falling into: *I fear, says he, (v. 3.) lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve thro' his Subtlety, so your Minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ.*

And such Jealousy and Suspicion as this is so far from being a Sin in those who have the Charge and Oversight of others committed to them, that 'tis a great Commendation;

mendation; being the Effect of the heartiest Love and Good-will to them. And therefore forasmuch as every Man is in some sort made by God an Inspector over the Behaviour of all his Brethren, so far as not to suffer Sin upon them, but to reprove them; it is no Uncharitableness in any Man, in order to the Discharge of this charitable Office of Reproof, to judge worse of his Brother than he has evident Grounds for; *i. e.* I mean, not that we are to think or believe that he is guilty of any Fault which we do not certainly know him to be guilty of, and thereupon to entertain a hard Opinion of him; but only upon Supposition that he may be guilty, when we have some little Grounds to suspect it, so to order our Admonition and Reproof, as that if he be really guilty of the Fault we suspect, it may serve to reclaim him from it.

3. Another sort of private Judgment not meant to be hereby forbidden by our *Saviour*, is a Judgment of Caution and Prudence; which we may be allowed to

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ground even upon Suspicion and Conjecture only. As, to give you an Instance of it.

I have heard, suppose, of such a Man, that he is a Knave, or a Cheat; that he has wrong'd or defrauded several who have dealt with him, or trusted to him; but now who it was that told me this, perhaps, I do not remember, nor what Reason he had to say this of him. I ought not therefore upon such a slender Ground as this, to pass a Judgment upon him so much as in my own Mind, or to condemn him as an unjust Person; and much less am I hereby warranted to represent him as such to others; this would be an uncharitable Judgment. But nevertheless, because I have been told this of him, and because I do not know but that my Information might be true, I may pass Judgment according to Evidence; i. e. I may judge it not improbable or unlikely that he may be such a bad Man as he has been represented to me: and thereupon I may very justly be more cautious in my Dealings with him, and more watchful

watchful not to be cheated by him, than I would have been in dealing with another Man, of whom I suspected no ill, nor had Reason to suspect any.

And the Reason of this is plain, namely, because so long as I do not upon this slender Suspicion conclude him to be an unjust Man, I am not uncharitable in my Judgment; and so long as I do not represent him as such to others, I am not unjust towards him. But all the Effect which my Suspicion of him has, is, that it makes me more cautious in dealing with him, than perhaps I should otherwise have been; yet however not more cautious than I might fairly and justly have been in dealing with any Man, of whose Honesty I was not very well assured.

Nay, if in Consequence of my Suspicion, tho' so slenderly grounded, I should decline dealing with him at all; and chuse rather to deal with some other Person of the same Trade or Business, of whom I had never heard any ill, there would be no Injustice in this; for there is no Injustice in chusing one Man to deal with

rather than another, tho' there be no Reason at all for such a Choice; and much less if there be any Reason for it, tho' it be never so small. But if there be any Wrong done to the Person whom upon this Account I avoid trading with, it was done by him who gave me that Information of him, which made me suspicious of his Honesty, (and if he had no good Ground for the evil Report which he gave of him, he was indeed unjust in giving it;) but if I had never heard that Report, I might nevertheless have dealt with another rather than with him: and my having heard some ill things of him, tho' I know not from whom, nor upon what Grounds, cannot be thought to lay an Obligation upon me to trade with him.

Thus I have shewn, what sort of Judgment was not meant to be forbidden by our *Saviour*, in this general Prohibition; *Judge not*: viz. 1. Not a Judgment of Things; not the judging that to be good, which is plainly good; and that to be evil, which is manifestly evil. 2. Not the judging our selves, and censuring and condemning

condemning our selves, for any thing which we know we have done amiss.

3. Not the Judgment of the Magistrate upon such Persons as are brought before him to be judged : nor yet, 4. And lastly, all private Judgment ; particularly not a Judgment in notorious Cases ; not a Judgment of Charity, a charitable Jealousy over others in order to their Good ; nor, lastly, a Judgment of Prudence and Caution. I proceed now in the second place,

II. To shew, what Judging of others is unlawful, and was intended to be forbidden by our *Saviour*, in this Precept ; *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

I. And first of all, this Precept of our *Saviour* must necessarily be understood, as meaning at least to forbid all false Judgment concerning others, the censuring and condemning them without Cause ; the conceiving an ill Opinion of them without any Ground ; and the judging them as Reprobates, tho' we know

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nothing ill by them. This Judgment of others is therefore sinful, because it is false; and also because it is highly injurious to our Neighbour, nourishing in us Hatred and Aversion towards him. And 'tis likewise as foolish as it is sinful, rendering our Judgment in other Cases, even when we do judge right, less regarded. For as a Man who is notorious for Lying, is never believed, no not when he speaks Truth; so he who is known to have passed a wrong Judgment upon some Persons, does thereby very much lessen the Value of his Judgment in other Cases; so that even when he does judge truly, yet Men will be afraid to rely or rest upon his Judgment. But,

2. Not only false, but also all rash Judgment, was hereby doubtless meant to be forbidden by our *Saviour*; i.e. when tho' not quite without Ground, yet without good and sufficient Ground, we judge harshly and uncharitably of our Neighbour, conceiving in our Minds a worse Opinion of him than we have a just Cause for.

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And we may be guilty of rash Judgment several Ways; as for Instance,

(1.) We judge rashly, when we judge hardly and uncharitably of our Neighbour, only from uncertain Report: and such Judgment of our Neighbour is therefore sinful, because 'tis very like to be false; for most of the ill Reports which go about are so, either in whole or in part. Oftentimes the whole Report is false, raised by some one who bare him Ill-will, and had a Mind to disgrace him; but it rarely happens that the whole Report is true, and that the Matter of Fact is barely and truly related, without the Reflections and Judgments which have been passed upon it by such as have related it; which Reflections (as the Story passes from one to another) come, in time, to be related as part of the Story it self. And it rarely fails, but that, if we take the Pains to sift to the Bottom any ill Report which is spread about concerning others, and follow it to its first Head, we find the Report a great deal worse, than the thing

it self was which gave Occasion to it. Seeing therefore we cannot judge with any Certainty only from Report, we ought not to make any Judgment, other than a Judgment of Caution, from that only; and if we do, we are guilty of rash Judgment, because we cannot be sure that our Judgment is right, it being much more probable to be wrong. And this is intimated in that Advice given by our *Saviour* to the *Jews*, *John vii. 24.* *Judge not according to Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment.*

(2.) We are guilty of rash Judgment, when we censure any Man, or pass Sentence against him only upon hearing his Accusation, without hearing what he hath to say in his own Defence; either to disprove the Charge brought against him, or to extenuate the Crime laid to his Charge. For 'tis but reasonable, that he who is best acquainted with his own Actions, and knows better than any one else by what Motives and Inducements he was persuaded thereto, and what End and Design

sign he had therein, should be heard as to what he has to say, as well as that we should hear others who know not so much: for the better a Man knows any thing, the more able he is to give full Evidence.

All that can be feared is, that a Man giving Evidence in his own Cause should be partial to himself, and represent things to the best Advantage. But if he should do so, if he should relate his Case so fairly and plausibly, as to deceive the Hearers into a better Opinion of him than he deserves; 'tis not so bad however to be mistaken on the charitable, as 'tis to be on the uncharitable Side; 'tis better of the two to acquit a Criminal than to condemn the Innocent. For 'tis manifest Injustice in a Judge to have his Ears open only on one Side, to hear only what a Man's Adversaries have to say against him, (who 'tis likely are as partial in their Accusation as he can be in his Defence;) and thereupon to pass Sentence of Condemnation upon him, without hearing what he has to say to clear himself. And therefore this

this was a Law, or at least a constant Practice among the *Romans*, grounded upon great Equity, to give a full Hearing to both Sides before they condemned any Man; as we are told in *Acts.* xxv. 16. *It is not the Manner of the Romans to deliver any Man to die, before he which is accused have the Accusers face to face, and have Licence to answer for himself, concerning the Crime laid against him.*

(3.) We are guilty of rash Judgment, and are uncharitable in our Censures of our Neighbour, when his Words or Actions being capable of a good as well as of a bad Sense, we put the worst Interpretation upon them, and take them in the worst Sense; and condemn him for that, for which, perhaps, God and his own Conscience, neither do nor will ever condemn him. Such was *Michal's* Judgment of King *David*, 2 *Sam.* vi. 16. who when she saw him leaping and dancing before the Lord, when he brought up the Ark from the House of *Obededom* to the City
of

of *David*, despised him in her Heart, esteeming him to be a light, wanton and shameless Man for what he had done, as she tells him at the 20th ¶. *How glorious was the King of Israel to Day, who uncovered himself to Day in the Eyes of the Handmaids of his Servants, as one of the vain Fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself?* She reckon'd his so leaping and dancing before the Ark, was the Effect of a too wanton and airy Temper, and unbecoming the Majesty of a King; when as indeed it was the Effect of a just and exceeding great Joy, for that great Blessing which God had vouchsafed him, in permitting him to bring up the Ark of God, the Symbol of his divine Presence, into his own City, and the Place which he had provided for it.

Now that such rash Judging or Censuring as this is a sinful and uncharitable Judgment is evident; for *Charity* (as the Apostle says in 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7.) thinketh no Evil; *Charity believeth all things, and hopeth all things.* He who is candid and charitable in his Censures

puts

puts the best Sense and Interpretation upon any doubtful Action of his Neighbour that it is capable of; and if it might be done with a good Design and Meaning, will suppose that it was so done, unless the contrary be evident and undeniable.

(4.) Another sort of rash and uncharitable Judgment, of like Nature with the former, is, when at the same time that we pretend to judge of any Fault which our Neighbour has been guilty of, we do also in our own Minds act the Part of a Counsel against him, aggravating and heightening his Crime as much as we can, and determining to what Degree he is guilty. And this is manifestly a rash Judgment, because tho' his Crime be (as is now supposed) evident and notorious; yet we know not what Excuses or Extenuations it is capable of; and he who takes upon him to be a Judge, should be rather Counsel for than against the Criminal. And therefore, if he knows not certainly that the Crime was committed knowingly and wilfully,

wilfully, he should rather presume that it was done ignorantly or by surprize. And if he is not sure that it was a deliberate Sin, he should rather suppose that the Man was hurried to it by a sudden Passion, or a strong and violent Temptation: and if it be not evident that it was done with an ill Meaning, he should rather think that the Man's Intention was good, tho' his Action was nought. Thus Charity will incline us to judge of others, extenuating their Crimes as much as we can, supposing the best of them that can be supposed, judging them criminal to as small a Degree as is possible, and presuming that they were betrayed to the Commission of those Sins which they have been guilty of, thro' Ignorance and Inadvertency; unless the Malice and Wilfulness thereof be so very evident, that it cannot but be seen and taken notice of. For there are abundance of Circumstances which do much lessen and diminish any Crime, both in right Reason and in the Judgment of God; and if without notorious Evidence we suppose it to be cloathed with
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the worst Circumstances, our Judgment is rash and ungrounded, and, as it may happen, may be false and unjust; and the Man, tho' he has indeed committed a Fault, yet may not be near so faulty and criminal as we take him to be.

(5.) Another Instance of rash and uncharitable Judgment, is when we pass Judgment upon our Neighbour, from one or two single Actions of his Life, and not from the general Tenor of his whole Life and Conversation. As for instance; when from an Act we infer a Habit, or from some few things that must be condemned in the Man, condemn the Man himself, and censure him as a Reprobate and Cast-away.

Now this sort of Judgment is rash and uncharitable, because it is built upon too slender Grounds. For the best of Men may and do fall sometimes, and there is no Man altogether without Fault. And therefore, to conclude, for Instance; that because a Man has been known to have been once overtaken with Drink, therefore

fore he is a Drunkard ; or because he has once committed such a Sin , that therefore he makes a common Trade and Practice of it , is a Judgment wherein we may very easily be mistaken ; and wherein , whether we are mistaken or no , still our Judgment is rash and uncharitable , because it might not have been as we supposed it was : and in any doubtful Case , Charity obliges us to think as favourably as we can of one another .

But it is yet rather more rash and uncharitable , when from some things which we see in our Neighbour which must be condemned , we proceed to condemn the Man himself , and to censure him as a vile Sinner , as a Reprobate and Cast-away . For the best of Men , and such as we are sure were the elect and chosen of God , have sometimes , in some few Instances , fallen very foully , and have risen again by Repentance ; several Examples whereof the holy Scripture it self furnisheth us with , as in just *Lot* , in righteous *Noah* , and *David* , a Man after God's own Heart , and divers others . And therefore if we know

know any one of our Neighbours who has fallen in like manner as they did, we ought not immediately thereupon to pass Sentence of Condemnation against him, and judge him as a Reprobate; because tho' the Sin it self was such as must needs be condemned, yet we know not but that the Man may have since heartily and sincerely repented of it, and so in judging him, we may condemn a Man whom God has pardoned and absolved.

In short, whether our Judgment in this Case be true or false, it is nevertheless a rash and unwarrantable Judgment; and we judge of Matters which do no ways belong to us to judge of, and which God has reserved entirely to himself. And so we are taught by the *Apostle, Rom. xiv. 4.* *Who art thou, that judgest another Man's Servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand.*

(6.) Another Instance of rash Judgment is when we pretend to judge of the inward Thoughts and Intentions of Men, farther

farther than the same are declared in plain Words, or by Actions of a certain Signification. For 'tis the incommunicable Property of God only, to search the Heart, and to try the Reins, and to know what is in Man. But when we pretend to know, and to give our Judgment thereof, our Judgment, if it be not always false, is always rash and ungrounded; because the very same Actions may be done by several Men, with very different Designs; and unless we could judge certainly of the Intention and Design, we are by no means competent Judges of the Action; because the moral Nature of any Action depends in great measure upon the Reasons and Motives of it, and upon the End and Intention which we had in it, of which none is able to judge truly, but God only. And this Argument against Judging others is well urged by the Apostle, *1 Cor. iv. 5. Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to Light the hidden things of Darkness, and will make manifest the Counsels of the Heart.*

(7.) Lastly; We are then also guilty of rash Judgment, when we judge of the Qualifications of Men; that is, of the Good or Evil which is in them, and what their State and Condition towards God is, by the good or evil things which befall them in this World. There is no sort of rash Judgment of others more common than this, and none in the World more likely to be false; the Dispensations of God's Providence to Men in this World being so very uncertain, that, as the wise *Man* says, *Eccles. ix. 1.* *We cannot know either Love or Hatred by all that is before us;* i. e. we can't judge with any Certainty, how God stands affected towards any Man by the good or evil things which happen to him in this Life.

And this sort of rash Judgment, viz. the judging Men to be wicked, because afflicted; or great Sinners, because grievously afflicted, our *Saviour* reproves at large in *Luke* xiii. at the beginning; where some having told him of the *Galileans, whose Blood Pilate had mingled with*

with their Sacrifices, our Saviour perceiving what their Intention was in telling him that Story ; *viz.* that they conceived it to be a Judgment of God upon them, and an Argument that they were very vile and wicked Men, seeing God had suffered them to fall into such a Calamity ; (our Saviour, I say) takes Occasion from thence to declare at large the Rashness of all such Judgment as is past upon Men, from what befalls them, in these Words ; *Jesus answering, said unto them ; Suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things : I tell you, nay — Or those eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell, and slew them ; think ye that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt in Jerusalem ? I tell you, nay ; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Thus I have shewn, what Judgment was not meant to be forbidden here by our Saviour ; and in part also, what Judgment it was his Design here to prohibit ; particularly, 1. All false, and, 2. All

rash Judgment of others; *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

But there are some other things also which I suppose it was our Saviour's Intention to prohibit by these Words; the speaking to which, and to the other Heads which I propos'd to discourse of, in treating of this Subject, I shall defer to another Opportunity.



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DISCOURSE LXXI.

The Sinfulness and Folly of Judging.

MATTH. vii. 1, 2.

*Judge not, that ye be not judged.
For with what Judgment ye judge,
ye shall be judged; and with
what Measure ye mete, it shall
be measured to you again.*

WHEN I began to discourse on
these Words, I propounded to
do these four Things.

O 4

I. To

I. To shew what Judging was not meant to be forbidden by our *Saviour* in these Words.

II. To shew what Judging is unlawful, and was certainly meant to be hereby forbidden.

III. By some general Arguments and Considerations, to shew both the Sinfulness and Folly of such Judging of others as was meant here to be forbidden. And,

IV. Lastly, To propose some Remedies for the Prevention and Cure of that general Proneness which is in Men to judge and censure one another.

I. To shew what Judging was not meant to be forbidden by our *Saviour* in these Words; or, when, and in what Cases, and upon what Occasions, and concerning what Things or Persons, we may without Blame give our Judgment.

For

For tho' the Prohibition be expressed as universally as it could be if all Judging had been intended to be thereby forbidden; *Judge not*; yet the thing it self, i. e. the making a Judgment in our Minds, of things, or Persons, and declaring the same, is not always evil. And therefore tho' there be no Exception or Limitation added in the Text it self, yet we are plainly enough taught, both by Reason, and by other Texts of holy Scripture, to understand this universal Prohibition with due Restrictions and Limitations; and seeing all Judging is not in it self unlawful, to understand these Words, as designing to forbid only such Judging as is unlawful; as the Judgment of Falshood, of Pride, of Idleness, of Curiosity, of Harshness and Uncharitableness, and the like.

After this I proceeded in the second Place—

II. To shew what Judging of others was hereby meant to be forbidden; *Judge not, that ye be not judged*; and two kinds of unlawful and prohibited Judgment,

ment, I have already mentioned; *viz.*
1. False Judgment, *i. e.* when without any Ground we judge our Neighbour to be guilty of any Fault; or condemn him as a Reprobate, tho' we know no Ill by him. And, 2. Rash Judgment, *i. e.* when we judge beyond Evidence, and censure more harshly and severely than we have just Grounds for. But,

3. It was the Design of our *Saviour* in these Words, to forbid not only false and rash Judgment, but also all needlessly passing or giving our Judgment concerning others. These Words, *judge not*, forbid us to judge at all concerning our Neighbour, unless when either that Place and Office which the Providence of God has fixed us in, obliges us to it, or when some good and charitable Design puts us upon it. These Words, *judge not*, forbid in general that Proneness and Aptness which there is in almost all Men to judge and condemn others; proceeding either from Pride and Affectation of Superiority, or from Malice and Hatred, or from some

some other vicious and corrupt Principle. *Who art thou that judgest another*, says the Apostle? Jam. iv. 12. 'Tis as if he had said, shew thy Warrant and Authority to execute this Office, or else thy assuming it is an unjust Usurpation. For to judge is manifestly an Act of Authority, of Jurisdiction and Power. He only can warrantably judge of another Man's Behaviour, who has the Charge of him, the Inspection over him, and who has Power to correct and punish him when he does amiss: but this no Man hath over his Equals, and much less over his Superiors. And yet Men are generally as apt to pass their Censures on such as are in no respect subject to them, nay on such as are placed in Authority over them, their Parents, their Governors, their Masters, and the like, as they are upon those who are under their Care and Charge. By which, they do not only usurp an Authority which they have no Right to, but they likewise assume an Office which they are by no means qualified to discharge; they judge and speak evil of things

things which they understand not ; they censure and blame such Administrations of their Governors and Superiors, as, for any thing they know, may deserve Commendation rather than Blame.

But however, whether they judge right or wrong, their Judging alone is a Fault; for when they judge their Superiors, they assume an Authority which is not given them; and whenever they pass Judgment concerning others without Warrant and Authority, they needlessly busy and encumber themselves with other Mens Concerns, to the great Neglect of their own Busines.

4. Even in those Cases wherein we are allowed to make a Judgment in our own Minds, concerning the Persons and Actions of other Men ; as, in notorious Cases, when both the Action and the Crime of it are evident, or in any other of the Cases formerly mentioned ; (even in these Cases, I say) this Precept of our *Saviour*, *Judge not*, may reasonably be understood as designed to forbid the needlessly declaring

declaring our Judgment thereof to others. And then we may be said to declare our Judgment needlessly, when we are not obliged to do it, either by Justice or Charity to our selves or others.

Thus, for Instance, if I see my Neighbour committing any Sin, I cannot but judge him guilty of it in my Mind; I cannot but believe my self, what I see with my own Eyes; and what I know to be a Sin, I cannot but condemn as such. But nevertheless, it is inconsistent with that Love and Charity which I ought to bear to him, whom I am commanded to love as my self, without good Reason moving me to it, forthwith to publish his Crime, to blaze abroad his Shame, and procure him to be judged and condemned by the rest of his Neighbours; for *Charity*, as the *Apostle* says, *covereth a multitude of Sins*. We always endeavour, as much as we can to hide and conceal the Faults of those whom we love; so that a Proneness and Delight to publish and divulge all the ill things which we know of our Neighbours, must needs proceed

proceed from want of Charity and Good-will towards them. And therefore, as here we are forbidden to judge, so we are frequently in other places of holy Scripture forbidden to *speak evil of others*; and that this was meant to be here forbidden by our *Saviour*, is evident from *James iv. 11, 12.* where the *Apostle* repeating this Precept of our *Saviour* against Judging, expresses it by *speaking evil of others*: *Speak not evil*, says he, *one of another, Brethren; for he that speaketh evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law; but if thou judge the Law, thou art not a Doer of the Law, but a Judge: there is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy; who art thou that judgest another?*

5. Lastly; another thing meant to be forbidden by our *Saviour* in this Precept, *Judge not*; is a needless and over-curious *Inquisitiveness* into the Faults of others. Tis true indeed, this is not properly Judging, but it is necessarily preparatory thereto,

thereto, and 'tis what a Proneness and Aptnes to judge others does naturally put us upon; for he, who is prone and disposed to censure and find fault, cannot forbear to desire Matter of Censure, and to wish to see somewhat that he may find Fault with. So that the same uncharitable Temper which disposes us to judge harshly and severely of our Neighbours, must needs also dispose us to pry into, and examine their Behaviour more narrowly than belongs to us to do, if we have no Authority or Jurisdiction over them. And 'tis indeed our judging and censuring such Actions of our Neighbours as these, which was here chiefly designed to be forbidden. For what offers it self to our Senses, we cannot but take notice of; and if it be evidently bad, we cannot but censure it as an ill thing: but we do then most of all transgress this Precept, when we search out Matter for Censure; when the open Behaviour of our Neighbour not affording us Ground enough to condemn him, we search and pry into all his secret Faults, and set our selves to
find

find out somewhat more, that we may tax and censure him for: when rather than not blame him for somewhat, we examine so narrowly into his Life, as not to overlook the least Mistranslation; and pry into him so nearly and exactly, as that if there be but the least Mote in his Eye, we shall be sure to discover it.

Such Inquisitiveness as this, being, I say, the necessary Consequence of a Proneness to judge and censure others, it may well be supposed that the Prohibition of this was meant to be comprehended under the Prohibition of Judging: and so our *Saviour* himself seems to expound his Meaning in the Words following the Text, where he immediately adds these Words; *and why beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but considerest not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?* By which Words immediately subjoined to this Prohibition of Judging, it seems that our applying our selves, to scan, and sift into, and find out, all the little Faults and Failings of others, is either a Part, or such a necessary and never-failing Comitant

comitant of that Judging others; which he here forbids, as that it must needs be included under the same Prohibition.

Thus I have shewn you what Judging was not, and what Judging was meant to be forbidden by our *Saviour*, in this general Prohibition; *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

I proceed now to the third thing proposed, which was,

III. To endeavour to dissuade you from the Practice of such Judging as is here forbidden, by some general Arguments and Considerations, shewing both the Sinfulness, and the Folly thereof

I. I shall represent to you the Sinfulness of it: and here it may be considered,

(1.) That this Precept of our *Saviour*, *Judge not*, is a Precept very easy to be observed; for which Reason the Transgression thereof is a greater Sin, than if it had been a Command which we could

not have kept without great Difficulty. For what Precept can be easier than this is? A Precept which enjoins us no Labour; which puts us to no Cost; which lays upon us no Burthen? Which only commands us to be easy and quiet; not to meddle with things which do not belong to us; not to thrust our selves into Business which is none of ours? Had indeed the quite contrary to this been commanded; had we been bidden to pry into and examine, to judge and pass Sentence upon, all the Actions of our Neighbours, we might then very justly have complained of the troublsom Office which we were put into; and with much better Reason might we then have declined the taking it upon us: but when we are only bid to be quiet and silent, the Transgression of such an easy Command of God as this, is a Sin capable of no Excuse.

(2.) It may be considered farther, that the Practice of Judging and Censuring those, who are not put into Subjection under

under us, is an Usurpation on God's Right. For to him Judgment and Vengeance do most properly belong; they so belong to him, that no other Person can either pass Judgment, or inflict Punishment, on any of his Fellow-Creatures, unless he hath received Commission from God to do it. *Who art thou that judgest another Man's Servant?* (says the Apostle, Rom. xiv. 4.) *to his own Master he standeth or falleth.* And again, v. 10. *Why dost thou judge thy Brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy Brother; for we shall all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ?* Whoever therefore thou art that judgest another without Authority, thou takest too much upon thee; thou invadest God's Office; thou usurpest upon his Right; thou settest thy self in God's Place, and assumest an Honour which is due only to him: thou art consequently guilty of the highest Arrogance and Presumption; yea, of no less a Crime than High-Treason against the Sovereign Majesty of Heaven and Earth; an Indignity which God cannot but resent most

highly, and punish most severely ; for he has solemnly declared, that he *will not give his Honour to another.*

(3.) As the Practice of judging and censuring each other is an Act of high Injustice towards God, so it is also towards Men, who by Nature are all equal, and by the Law of their Creation are subject to God only, and to those to whom he delegates a Part of his Authority, and makes his Deputies and Viceroy's here upon Earth. 'Tis therefore most manifestly an unjust Usurpation upon our Neighbour, to meddle in his Affairs, and to draw him under our Jurisdiction, when we have no legal Authority over him; for none hath in himself Authority to judge, but he only who hath Authority to make Laws; *there is one Lawgiver,* says the *Apostle,* *who is able to save and to destroy;* *who art thou that judgest another?* If therefore we have not Authority to oblige others to obey our Commands, we have no Authority to judge them for their Faults; nor to punish them

them in their Reputation by blasting their Fame, any more than we have in their Bodies or Goods.

The Practice of Judging is likewise unjust, as being most contrary to that golden Rule of Justice of *doing as we would be done unto*. For there is nothing which we take greater Offence at, than when any of our Neighbours take upon them to censure our Actions, or condemn our Persons; when 'tis our own Case, and we our selves are judged and censured by any other Person, we have always ready at hand that Question put to *Moses* by the *Israelite* which had done his Neighbour Wrong, *Exod. ii. 14.* *Who made thee a Prince and a Judge?* Wherefore dost thou meddle in Matters which thou hast nothing to do with? And what hast thou to do to judge those, who are not subject to thy Jurisdiction? And if this Reproof be reasonable when others take upon them to judge us, it is no less reasonable when we take upon us to judge them. *For whatsoever we would that Men should do unto us, the same*

P 3 Should

*Should we do unto them; as we are taught
by our Saviour at the 12th Verse of this
Chapter.*

(4.) The Practice of judging and censoring our Brethren, is also as uncharitable as 'tis unjust; it argues a most culpable Defect of Love towards them. For whom we love, we are always inclined to favour; we put the best Interpretation we can upon every thing they say or do. *Charity thinketh no Evil*, as the *Apostle* says, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. Moreover, whom we love we always endeavour to represent as fair and lovely as we can to others; *Charity beareth all things*, says the *Apostle* at the 7th Verse of that Chapter; *πάντα σέβει*, it covereth or concealeth all things; i. e. it is very industrious to hide from the Knowledge of others, whatever is bad in the Person beloved. These are most natural Fruits or Effects of Charity; and thus we always express our Love towards our selves; we interpret all our own Actions in the best Sense, we make the fairest Apologies which we can for them:

them: and if they are manifestly culpable, we however strive what we can to extenuate or excuse them; and by all Ways in our Power, endeavour to render our selves as lovely and as well esteemed as we can possibly do. So that when, on the contrary, we expound our Neighbour's Actions in the worst Sense, when instead of extenuating and excusing his Faults, we load him with the greatest Aggravations, and publish and declare to others that harsh Judgment which we have formed of him in our own Minds, endeavouring thereby to render him as odious and despicable to others, as we have represented him to our selves; this is a most manifest Breach of that Law of Charity, that second great Commandment in the Law, comprehending under it all the Duties which we owe to our Neighbour, *thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.*

Hitherto I have endeavoured to shew the great Sinfulness of this too common Practice of judging and censuring one another.

2. I proceed now very briefly to shew
also the great Folly of it. And;

(1.) If there were nothing more in it
than only this, that while we busy our
selves in prying into the Behaviour of o-
thers, and passing our Judgment upon
them, we neglected our own Business, as
we must needs do; this alone would be
Folly enough. For what does it concern
us to enquire, what does it profit us to
know, what this or the other Neighbour
has done amiss? Or what Advantage do
we reap to our selves, from passing a
harsh Sentence against them? And yet
while we are busied in these things which
concern us not at all, our precious Time
passes away, and our own necessary Busi-
ness is left undone. For 'tis a most true
Observation, that they who are most con-
cerned about other Men's Lives, are com-
monly least careful of their own. And it
must needs be so, because being so much
abroad, they cannot be so much at home
as they should be. Directing their Sight

to things at a Distance from them, they must needs overlook things that are nearer; spending the greatest Part of their Time in prying into and scanning the Behaviour of others, they have not enough left to examine, as they should, their own. And what can be more foolish than this? For he that is truly *wise*, is *wise for himself*, as *Solomon* observes, *Prov. ix. 12.* True Wisdom shews it self in being most concerned about things which are of the greatest and nearest Concern to us. And in Matters relating to this Life, we should account him a foolish Man who was so very officious in doing Business for other Men, tho' it was in doing them real Kindnesses, as thereby to neglect his own Business, and so suffer himself and his Family to come to Want; because (as we use to say) *Charity begins at home*, and it is no Charity to do Kindnesses to Strangers to the very great Prejudice or utter undoing of our selves, and those whom we are in Justice as well as Charity more strongly obliged to provide for, and to take care of. But the Practice
of

of Judging and Censuring others is a much greater Instance of Folly than that ; for when we spend our Time in sifting out our Neighbour's Faults, we do not design, neither do we really do, them any Good, but rather (as I shewed before) we do them great Injury ; and yet by doing this we lose that Time which God has given us to fit and prepare our selves for Eternity, and neglect that Business which is of the greatest Concern in the World to us, the Care of our own immortal Souls.

(2.) The Folly of this Practice will farther appear, from the Consideration of the Mischiefs which do thence accrue to our selves. For it is a great Instance of Folly to labour in vain, and to take a great deal of Pains to no good Purpose ; but it is a much greater to spend our Time and Pains only in working Mischief to our selves, in procuring our selves to be hated and spoken Evil of by all that know us. And there is nothing which does more certainly produce these evil Effects, than the Practice of rashly
Judging,

Judging, and harshly Censuring others; nothing doth more excite the Hatred of Men against us than this: because they look upon it (and that not without Reason) as a certain Argument of our Hatred and ill Will towards them; and 'tis as natural to hate those who hate us, as 'tis to love those who love us. 'Tis not therefore to be expected that they should bear us good Will, to whom we shew such Hatred and ill Will; so that the Practice of Judging others doth not only provoke, but (considering the corrupt Nature of Man) doth, in a manner, authorize them to judge us with the like Severity, and to requite us in the same kind; it seeming but Justice, that he who intends or practises Mischief to others, should suffer the like Mischief himself.

And this deserves the more to be considered, because there is nothing in the World more easy, than for our Neighbours to revenge this Injury in kind, and to judge and censure us as severely as we did judge and censure them.

And

And this is the Argument whereby our *Saviour* himself is supposed by some to dissuade from this Practice, here in the Text ; *Judge not that ye be not judged; for, says he, with what Judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what Measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.* That is, you must look to be so dealt with by others as you deal with them. You cannot reasonably expect Favour from those to whom ye shew none. This is an Event which may justly be expected, and which rarely fails to come to pass.

But I suppose the Judgment here meant by our *Saviour*, was rather the Judgment of God, than the Judgment of Men; *Judge not that ye be not judged, i.e. that ye be not judged by God.* And then these Words suggest to us another Consideration, whereby the Folly of this Practice, of rashly and harshly judging others, will more fully appear. Namely;

(3.) Because by this Practice, which is highly injurious to our Neighbour, and
of

of no Benefit or Advantage to our selves even in this World, but rather the contrary; we justly provoke God to judge us, with the same Judgment wherewith we judge others. *Blessed are the Merciful*, says our Saviour, Matt. v. 7. (which Words may be understood of such as are candid and merciful in their Censures of others, as well as of those who are merciful in other Respects; *blessed are the Merciful*) *for they shall obtain Mercy*. And on the other Side, 'tis expressly threaten'd in Jam. ii. 13. that *he shall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath shewed no Mercy*. This is the righteous Judgment of God, to deal in such manner by us, as we deal by our Brethren. Not that if we judge others rashly, and condemn them without Cause, God also will judge us rashly, and condemn us undeservingly; no, far be this from God, *shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right?* But the Meaning of that Threatning is, that God will not be favourable in his Judgment of us; that he will be severe with us in what we do amiss;

amiss; that he will judge us without Mercy, and strictly repay us according to our Deserving, in case we are unmercifull and uncharitable in our Censures of our Brethren. And what can be more equal than this? For ought not we to have pity on our Fellow-Servants, (over whom we have no Authority) if we look that our Lord and Master (against whom our Offences are innumerable) should have pity on us? And if we will shew no Favour to a Man like our selves, to one of our Fellow-Sinners, to one who is in the same Condemnation; how can we deserve Favour, with what Reason cari we hope for any? For in condemning him we condemn our selves, who are guilty of many Sins as well as he; so that there is nothing more needful to condemn us, but only that God should judge us out of our own Mouth. And upon this Ground the *Apostle St. Paul* argues against, and dissuades from, this Practice, *Rom. ii. 1, 3.* *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O Man, who soever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thy*

thy self; for thou that judgest, dost the same things; i. e. Thou art a Sinner against God no less than he, tho' perhaps not guilty of just the same Faults— And thinkest thou this, O Man, that judgest them which do such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the Judgment of God?

And these Considerations will, I hope, be sufficient to dissuade you from the Practice here forbidden; *judge not, that ye be not judged.* I proceed now in the fourth and last Place, very briefly—

IV. To propose some Remedies for the Prevention and Cure of this vile Disposition, and too common Practice of Judging and Censuring one another. And I shall but name them. And,

i. The most sure and effectual Means to prevent all harsh and forbidden Judging of others, is to be in Charity with all Men, and to *love our Neighbour as our selves;* which if we do, there will be no Difficulty at all in forbearing to judge harshly

harshly of him. For whom we love we are naturally apt to think and believe well of. Love sees no Faults in the Person beloved; or if they are so plain that they cannot but be seen, it disposes us however to extenuate, abate, connive at, and see as little of them as is possible. *Hatred stirreth up Strife, but Love covereth all Sins*, says the wise Man, Prov.

X. 12.

2. Therefore, in order to the avoiding that harsh and uncharitable Judging of others which is here forbidden, we should do well never to pass any Judgment at all, no not in our own Minds, (so far as we can forbear it;) at least never to declare and tell to others our Judgment, concerning either the Person or the Actions of any Man, between whom and us there hath been any Strife upon any Account. For he is by no means qualified to be a Judge, but may fairly be excepted against, who is at Enmity with the Person whom he is to judge; because it may well be supposed that that Prejudice

or

or Aversion, which he has already conceived against him in his Mind, will so byass his Judgment, and so incline him to Harshness and Severity, that he will not examine the Cause fairly, nor judge of it impartially.

And the Reason is the same in private Judgments. Of him, who is our Adversary, it is great odds that we shall not judge so candidly and impartially, as we ought to do. So that the only sure means to avoid the Guilt of false or rash Judgment in such a Case, is by wholly declining both to make and to give our Judgment concerning any Person whom we are at Enmity with.

3. In order to the avoiding false and rash Judgment, it is necessary, that even in those Cases wherein we may judge, as in evident and notorious Cases; or wherein we are obliged to judge, as when we have the Charge and Inspection of others committed to us; we should nevertheless be very slow in making our Judgment concerning them. For how clear soever

the Case may appear to us at the first sight, there can be no harm in taking more time to examine and consider it, before we pass Sentence: for that which is true to Day, will be as true to Morrow; so that it will be at least as well to delay the declaring our Judgment till then; and by taking so much more time to consider, we shall often see Cause to give a different Judgment then, from what we should have given now. However, we can hardly ever be sure that we understand the Case fully at the first sight; and of what we are not sure we understand fully, we ought not to give or declare our Judgment. For *he that answereth a Matter before he heareth it, it is both a Folly and a Shame unto him;* as the wise Man says, *Prov. xviii. 13.*

4. Another most excellent Means to avoid false and rash Judgment, is, often calling to Mind the Mistakes which we have already committted in making or giving our Judgment concerning others. For when we consider that we have often already

already been deceived in our Judgment, and have many times, thro' Rashness and Precipitancy in giving Judgment, condemned those whom afterwards we have seen Cause to acquit, this will make us more cautious in giving Judgment for the future, and persuade us to take more time to consider things, and never again to declare our Judgment, till we are very sure that we understand the Case fully.

5. There is nothing that would more effectually cure and prevent false and rash Judgment of others, than a firm Resolution not to make the Lives and Actions of our Neighbours the Subject of our Talk; never to speak what Ill we know of others, unless we are either in Justice or Charity obliged to it; and never to declare our Judgment concerning them, if it be ill, unless we are in Duty bound to declare it; for we should hardly ever care to trouble our selves to make a Judgment concerning others, if when we had made it we were obliged to keep it to our selves.

Q 2

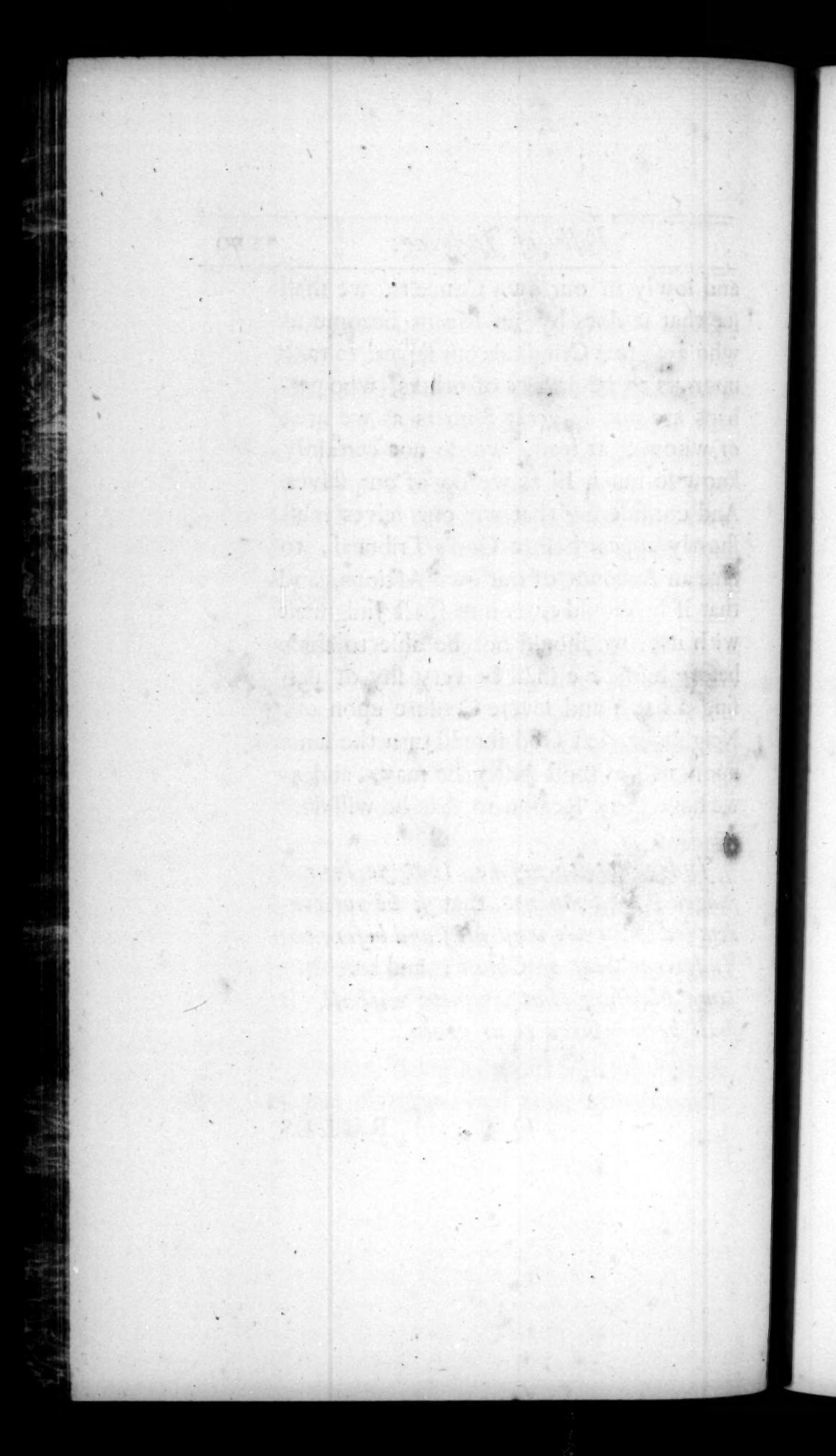
6. And

6. And lastly, let us frequently and seriously reflect upon our own Faults and Miscarriages, and that will effectually cure us of our Proneness to judge others. For we know our selves a great deal better than we do others ; and there is no Man but who, if he seriously examines his own Life, will know more Ill by himself, than he does of any of his Neighbours. And if we are conscious of our own Faults and Imperfections, and as sensible as we ought to be, of our own Need of the Divine Mercy and Forgiveness, we shall not be over-forward to judge and condemn our Neighbours. We shall find our selves Work enough at home, to *pull out the Beam that is in our own Eye*, to correct our own Faults, and to amend our own Lives ; and shall have no time to spare from that, and from the necessary Affairs of Life, needlessly to pry into, to scan, and censure the Misbehaviour of other Men.

Besides, being by a just Sight and Sense of our own manifold Sins, made humble and

and lowly in our own Conceits, we shall see that it does by no Means become us who are great Criminals our selves, to take upon us to be Judges of others, who perhaps are not so great Sinners as we are ; of whom , at least, we do not certainly know so much Ill as we do of our selves. And considering that we our selves must shortly appear before God's Tribunal, to give an Account of our own Actions, and that if he should enter into strict Judgment with us, we should not be able to abide before him, we shall be very shy of passing a harsh and severe Censure upon our Neighbour, lest God should tyrn the same upon us, as most justly he may, and as we have great Reason to fear he will do.

Judge not therefore, that ye be not judged; condemn not, that ye be not condemned; for we must all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ; and with the same Measure that we mete withall, it shall be measured to us again.



ଅବ୍ୟାକ୍ଷରିତ ପରିମାଣ କରିବାର ନିଯମ
R U L E S
FOR
JUDGING
Of OTHERS.

Q 4

СУДЯ
заяв
ИДЕИ
закон



DISCOURSE LXXII.

Rules for Judging of Others.

MATTH. vii. 3, 4, 5.

*And why beholdest thou the Mote
that is in thy Brother's Eye, but
confidereſt not the Beam that is
in thine own Eye?*

*Or how wilt thou say to thy Bro-
ther; Let me pull out the Mote
out of thine Eye; and behold a
Beam is in thine own Eye?*

Thou

Thou Hypocrite, first cast out the Beam out of thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.



N the Words immediately foregoing, on which I have formerly discoursed, our *Saviour* had forbidden a Practice which Mankind are generally exceeding prompt to, *viz.* the Judging and Censuring others; which he had dissuaded from, chiefly, by the Consideration of its exposing those who practise it to be judged, both by God and Men, with the same Severity where-with they do judge others; *Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what Judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what Measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* The Meaning is, first, that they who are severe and unmerciful in their Censures of others, may justly fear that other Men will be as severe

vere and unmerciful in censuring them, (there being seemingly a sort of Equity in it, that a Man should be dealt with as he himself deals with others ; there being manifestly no just Cause for any Man to complain, if what he suffers from others be no more than they or others have before suffered from him;) and not only so, but, secondly, they who are prone to judge others may likewise justly fear, that God also will judge them without Mercy ; and that he will be very severe in marking whatever they do amiss, when they are so rigorous and severe in the Censures which they pass upon their Neighbours ; according to that of the Apostle, *James ii. 13. He shall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath shewed no Mercy.*

And the Words which I have now read to you, and am at this time to discourse of, do plainly belong to the same Subject ; and so may well be understood, I. As urging another good Argument to dissuade us from Judging ; and, II. As prescribing an excellent Means to cure us of this Fault.

I. This

I. This may be understood as urging another good Argument to dissuade us from Judging; *why beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but considerest not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?* Which Argument is taken from our own Incompetency to discharge well this Office; for 'tis indecent and incongruous for a Man who is himself a Criminal, to take upon him (especially without good Warrant and Authority from his Superiors) to sit in Judgment upon his fellow Criminal. And that's the Case of us all, even of the best of us; for we have all great Faults of our own, we are all highly guilty before God, some, it may be, of some Sins, and some of others, but all of them capital and damnable; no matter therefore at present which is the greater, or which is the lesser Sinner of the two; for so long as both of them are Sinners, neither of them is fit to be a Judge of the other. For 'tis not fit that a Thief should sit in Judgment, tho' upon a Murtherer; and much less that a Murtherer

Murtherer should sit in Judgment upon a Thief; for they are both Criminals, and the proper Place for both of them is to stand at the Bar; there let them both do the best they can to clear themselves of the Crimes whereof they are severally accused; but till they can do that, 'tis a bold Presumption in either of them to offer to sit upon the Bench, and to pass upon the other that Sentence of Death, which he himself has deserved no less than the other, tho' perhaps not for just the same Crime: and this Argument against Judging others is well urged by the Apostle in Rom. xiv. 10. *Why dost thou judge thy Brother, or why dost thou set at nought thy Brother; we shall all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ?* i. e. we are all Criminals, and we must all be judged by *Christ* for our own Faults; and therefore it is not becoming us, who must pass under Judgment our selves, to take upon us to give Judgment upon others.

II. In these Words, our *Saviour* likewise prescribes an excellent Means to cure us

us of this common Fault of Judging others. *Viz.* by directing us to look into our selves, and to busy our selves at home in amending what we shall find amiss in our selves; which if we do, we shall have little or no leisure Time to spend in scanning and sifting the Lives and Manners of other Men: or if we have any Time to spare, and are in Duty obliged to have an Oversight and Inspection over others, and to judge and censure them in order to their Amendment, we shall be then in a better Capacity than we are now, to discharge this Duty faithfully and wisely; *first cast out the Beam that is in thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.* *First cast out the Beam that is in thine own Eye;* that ought to be every Man's first and chiefest Care; for every Man is nearer to himself than he is to his Neighbour, and hath a greater Concern in his own Welfare than in any other Man's; and *Charity,* as we use to say, *begins at home:* and in our worldly Concerns we always practise according to this

Maxim;

Maxim. In case of Fire, our first Care is to save our own Persons and Goods, and when that is done, we think it time enough then to help our Neighbours; and in any other Danger, our first Thoughts always respect our selves, our greatest Concern is to secure our selves, and till that be done, we think our selves under no Obligation to assist in the rescuing others from the same Danger.

And should we take the same Course in our spiritual Concerns (as 'tis certainly highly reasonable we shou'd do) for the Salvation of our Souls, is a Matter of much greater Importance to us, than the Preservation of our Goods, or Care of our Lives; shou'd we, I say, take the same Course in our spiritual Concerns) and make it our first Care to correct our own Faults and Miscarriages, this first Care would so fully employ us, that we should have little Time, and less Mind to busy our selves in other Men's Matters, farther than our own Duty obliged us to it.

And how good a Preservative this would be to keep us from ever rashly or needlessly

ly judging others, we may learn from that Passage of History which we meet with in *John viii. 3, &c.* where 'tis said; *the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto Jesus a Woman taken in Adultery, and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master—Moses in the Law commanded that such should be stoned, but what sayst thou?* Now this (as the Evangelist observes) they said, tempting him, *that they might have to accuse him;* for if he had acquitted her, they wou'd have accused him to their Nation, as one that had broken the Law of *Moses* by giving Judgment contrary to it; and if he had condemned her, if he had warranted them to execute upon her the Sentence that was given by the Law of *Moses* against Adultery, they would then have had whereof to accuse him before the *Roman Governor*, as one that took upon him, without Commission from the *Roman Emperor*, to whom the Nation of the *Jews* was then in Subjection, to be a Judge in Matters of Life and Death: our *Saviour* therefore did neither of these, he neither

neither acquitted her whose Crime was so notorious, neither did he condemn her to Death, where he had no legal Authority so to do; but he at once defeated the wicked Design which these Men had against himself, and likewise put an effectual Stop to their malicious Prosecution of the Criminal, by only saying, (as you may see at the 7th Verse of that Chapter,) *he that is without Sin among you, let him first cast a Stone at her;* for these Words of our Lord brought to the Remembrance of every one of them, the Sins, perhaps of the same kind, it may be of a more heinous Nature, that he himself had been guilty of; the Consequence of which was, that being every one of them convicted by their own Consciences, *they went out, one by one, beginning at the Eldest, even unto the last,* till Jesus and the Criminal were left alone.

And this would be a general Consequence of Men's reflecting, as they ought to do, upon themselves, and examining their own Behaviour; they would see so many and such great Faults in themselves

which needed Amendment, that they wou'd have little time left to pry into the Faults of other Men's Lives; and being convicted by their own Consciences, would quickly discern that it was a Matter of much greater and nearer Concern to them, to reform their own Lives, than it was to be Judges of other Men's; and so would be easily persuaded at least to let this alone, till that were first done, i. e. not to take upon them to judge and censure others, till, after having amended whatever was amiss in themselves, they had more Leisure than they yet had to look abroad, and were in a better Capacity than they yet were, to reform others.

But this Argument against rash and uncharitable Judgment, and likewise this Preservative against it, I have already spoken somewhat of in my former Discourses on the two foregoing Verses; and therefore shall not now enlarge farther thereupon; but shall confine my present Discourse to these other Points which the Text offers to our Consideration; namely,

ly, 1. That they who are prone to judge and censure others are commonly worse Men than those whom they censure; *why beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but confidereſt not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?* 2. That every Man's first and chiefest Care ought to be to spy out and to correct his own Faults; *thou Hypocrite, cast out first the Beam out of thine own Eye.* 3. That they especially which take upon them to reprove and correct others for their Faults, ought to be very careful that their own Behaviour be in all Points blameless and unreprouable. *How wilt thou say to thy Brother, let me pull out the Mote out of thine Eye, and behold a Beam is in thine own Eye? Cast out first the Beam out of thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote, &c.*

1. 'Tis implied in these Words, that they who are prone to judge and censure others, are commonly worse Men than those whom they censure; this is implied in the first Words of the Text; *why beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but confidereſt not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?*

R 2 beholdest

holdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but considerest not the Beam that is in thine own Eye? For a *Mote* is a little Straw or a small Dust, such as is apt to be blown into the Eye by the Wind, which makes it smart for the present, and hinders the free Use of the Sight for a short while, but is with little Difficulty wash'd out again, after which the Eye sees as well as it did before: but a *Beam* is a great Piece of Wood, such as if by any chance it should be stricken against the Eye, would not only pain it, would not only hinder the Sight, but is sufficient to dash the Eye quite out, or so to spoil it that it will never see more; when therefore the Faults of those who are judged and censured are here called *Motes*, and the Faults of those who do judge and censure others are liken'd to a *Beam* in the Eye, it seems as if our *Saviour* designed hereby to signify, that they who are prone to judge and censure others, are (generally speaking) greater Sinners than those whom they pass their Judgment and Censure upon.

And

And that thus it commonly is will appear if we consider, first, on the one side, what those Faults are which are the common Subjects of Censure and rash Judgment; and, secondly, on the other side, what Sins are included and comprehended in rash and uncharitable Judgment: by comparing which together it will appear (as I said) that he who is guilty of rash and uncharitable Judgment, is commonly a worse Man than he who is rashly judged and uncharitably censured by him.

For, first, the Sins included and comprehended in rash and uncharitable Judgment of others, are Pride, Malice, Envy, and the like; Vices of the worst sort, which argue the worst and vilest Temper of the Mind, and which are naturally productive of the worst Fruits in the outward Life and Coverstation: but, on the other side, the things which are commonly the Subjects of rash Censure, are either no Faults at all, or if they be, they are commonly lesser Sins, either Sins of Ignorance and Weakness, or some small Failings in such Men as are in the main

blameless and unreprovable, or else perhaps some Matters of private Opinion, wherein Men do differ from one another; which one Man is satisfied of the Lawfulness of, and another Man doubts of or disallows, and therefore censures all those as great Sinners who practise the same without Scruple.

No Man was ever more severely censured than our blessed *Saviour* was by the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; but what was it for? Was it for some great Sin? For some notorious Scandal? For some manifest Vice and Immorality in his Practice? No surely; for *in him*, as we are told, there *was no Sin*; but they censured him as guilty of very great Faults, when indeed there was no Fault in him, but only a Mistake in themselves.

Thus they censured him as a Sabbath-breaker, only because he understood the Meaning of the fourth Commandment better than they did; and kept it according to its true Sense and Design, and not according to the rigorous Interpretation which their Superstition had put upon it:

they

they censured him, I say, as a Sabbath-breaker, because he did Good upon the Sabbath; whereas they foolishly thought, that the Rest of the Sabbath was instituted merely for Rest sake: but he understood the Law better than they did; he knew that the Rest of the Sabbath, *i. e.* the ceasing from the ordinary Works and Labours of Life, was enjoined only that Men might be the more at leisure for Works of Devotion and Charity; he knew, *that the Sabbath was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath;* and that he kept the Day best who did most Good upon it; and that *Mercy* was more acceptable to God than *Sacrifice:* which Saying, had they known the Meaning of, they would *not have condemned the Guiltless,* as he says *Matt. xii. 7.* speaking of this very Matter.

Thus also they censured him as a *Man gluttonous, and a Wine-bibber, and as a Friend of Publicans and Sinners,* *Matt. ii. 19.* the former, only because his Way of Life was free and familiar; the latter, because he declined not the Com-

pany of the worst of Men, when there was an Opportunity of doing them Good by his Instruction and Advice: now these were really no Faults in him; but their Censure of him was grounded only upon their own Mistake, who placed Religion in the Choice of Meats and Drinks, and in abstaining from things which God had not forbidden; and thought there was not so much Piety and Charity in converting a Sinner from the Error of his Ways, as there was in a supercilious Disdain of his Person, and keeping off at a Distance from him, according to the Example of their Predecessors in the Prophet *Isaiah's* time, who said, *Stand by thy self, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou*; *Isai. lxv. 5.*

And yet these same *Scribes* and *Pharisees* censured St. *John Baptist* as a Man that was Lunatick, and besides himself; because his Way of Life was of different sort from our *Saviour's*, because he was very abstemious and reserved; because he lived in the Wildernes, and conversed but little in the World. *Matt. ii. 18.*

John

John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking; and, they say, he hath a Devil.

Another Example we have of this rash Censuring and Judging others among the *Romans*, to whom St. *Paul* sent his Epistle; *Rom. xiv. 2. One believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak eateth Herbs: and ¶ 5. One Man esteemeth one Day above another; another esteemeth every Day alike.* Such difference in Opinion there was even among the first *Christians*, and in the Churches which the *Apostles* themselves had planted; and had it rested there, and had each Side practised according to their private Opinion, there had been no great Harm in it; for *Meat* (as the same *Apostle* faith) commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse: and again; the Kingdom of God is not *Meat and Drink, but Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost:* but this they not rightly understanding, censured and judged those that differ'd from themselves

themselves in these Opinions of small Importance, and who acted accordingly as very great Sinners; he that made no difference in Meats judged him who did, as weak and superstitious; and he that did make a difference, judged the other as prophane and irreligious; and thus when neither of them were indeed much to blame for their Opinion only, whether it was true or false, nor yet for acting according to their Opinion; both of them became exceeding guilty, by rashly censuring and judging each other.

And thus, I say, it is most commonly; the Matters for which Men are most apt to be judged and censured by others, are either small Faults, such as the wisest and best Men are seldom clear of; or very often, they are only supposed Faults; *i. e.* either such Practices as are indifferent in themselves, and are judged to be Faults only by those which have not formed a right Judgment of things in their own Minds; or else they are such Practices as tho' they be really vicious in those that do them, the Persons judged guilty there-

of

of are not certainly known to have done. For as to Matters which are manifestly sinful, and which any Person does openly allow himself in the Practice of, these are not properly Subjects of Censure or Judgment, but rather of Sight and Knowledge; for it is improper to say that we judge a Man to be an Adulterer, when his Adultery is notorious and manifest; or that we judge a Man to be a Drunkard, when we and all the Neighbourhood know him to be so; and when he practises his Sin so openly, that none who know him can be ignorant of it: this, I say, is not properly Judgment, but Knowledge; for we then only can be properly said to make a Judgment of a Man, when from what we see in him we argue and infer a thing which we do not see. The Matters therefore, I say, for which Men are commonly judged and censured by others, being only supposed Faults, *i.e.* such things as 'tis not certain they have done, or which if they have done, it is not certain that they did ill in doing them; and, on the other side, the Principles and Causes

ses of rash and uncharitable Judgment being so manifestly evil, it plainly appears, that they who are guilty of rash and uncharitable Judgment, are commonly worse Men than those who are rashly judged, and uncharitably censured by them. *Why beholdest thou the Mote (that small Dust or Straw,) that is in thy Brother's Eye, and considerest not the Beam (that much greater thing,) that is in thine own Eye?* Nay, farther,

(2.) If the things for which we judge and censure others are manifestly evil, and the Men are manifestly guilty thereof, yet it may truly enough be said, in the general, that they are but *Motes*, in Comparison with those greater Sins which are included and comprehended in rash and uncharitable Judgment; because they are such Faults, as the Men who are guilty of them may more easily be brought to a Sight and Sense of, and to Repentance for, than they who are prone to judge and censure others can be, of and for those Faults and Vices of the Mind which dis-
pose

pose them to uncharitable Judgment. And thus our Saviour observes, *Matth. xxi. 31.* speaking to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who were proud and conceited of themselves, and severe Judges and Censurers of others; *Verily I say unto you, that the Publicans and the Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you; for John came unto you in the way of Righteousness, and ye believed him not, but the Publicans and the Harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterwards, that ye might believe him.* And he designed the same thing in that Parable of the *Pharisee* and the *Publican*, which we meet with in *Luke xviii. 9, &c.* He spake this Parable, says the Evangelist, unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Two Men went up into the Temple to pray, the one a *Pharisee*, and the other a *Publican*; the *Pharisee* stood and prayed thus with himself; *God, I thank thee that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican;* *I fast*

fast twice in the Week, I give Tithes of all that I possess. And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his Eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his Breast, saying, God be merciful to me a Sinner. I tell you, this Man went down to his House justified rather than the other. The Meaning of which last Words is not that an Extortioner, an unjust Man, or an Adulterer, such as the *Publican* is there supposed to be, could be justified by God while he continued in the Practice of those notorious Sins, for *God will not justify the wicked*; but that such Enormities in Practice are more readily discerned, and are consequently more easy, and more like to be reformed, than Pride and Arrogance, Envy and Malice, Self-Conceit and Hypocrisy, and such other Vices of the Mind, which, like inward Ulcers in the Body, tho' of all the most dangerous and deadly, yet lie not so open to be search'd and examin'd into, and cannot be so easily reach'd by such Medicines as are proper for their Cure, as outward Sores and Maladies may be; and therefore

therefore how bad a Man soever he be, who is judged and reprobated by others, tho' he be really as bad as the *Pharisee* supposed this *Publican* to be, and tho' he has not yet repented of those enormous Crimes which he has been guilty of, yet he can hardly be a worse Man than the *Pharisee*, he can hardly be worse than those are, who are prone to judge and reprobate others; *i. e.* who are proud and envious, and malicious, and highly uncharitable; for if they were not so, they would not take upon them to judge of others without Warrant and Commission so to do; or at least they would be more candid and charitable in their Censures. Or if the vile *Publican* be indeed at present as bad a Man as the conceited and hypocritical *Pharisee*, yet in this respect at least he is the better Man of the two, that he may more easily be convicted of his Sins by the Checks of his own Conscience, and the charitable Reproofs of his Neighbour, than the other can be, and is consequently in a more likely way of being reformed than the other is. Well therefore

therefore might our *Saviour* prescribe to such as are apt to judge and censure others uncharitably, that they should rather spend their Judgments upon themselves, than upon their Neighbours; *thou Hypocrite, cast out first the Beam out of thine own Eye.* And this leads me to the second Point I was to speak to, *viz.*

2. That every Man's first and chiefest Care ought to be to spy out and to correct his own Faults; *cast out first the Beam out of thine own Eye.* And the Reason of this I have already hinted at, *viz.* because every Man is nearer to himself than he is to his Neighbour, and has a greater Interest and Concern in his own well-doing, and well-being, than in any ther Man's; and *Charity* should *begin at home.* Nay indeed, true *Charity* will most certainly *begin at home;* for it is not in our Power, if we would never so fain do it, to love another better than we love our selves, or to desire another's Welfare more than we do our own. And therefore if any Man be very curious in spying

spying out other Men's Faults, and very officious in offering his Help to reform and amend them, and yet at the same time neglects himself; his Zeal to reform others may proceed from Pride and Self-Conceit, or it may be the Fruits of a pragmatical Temper, which loves to be meddling in other Men's Matters, or of a Desire of Superiority and Authority over others; or the Man may have a worldly Interest and Design carrying on, which he thinks may be best promoted by a Shew of great Zeal for Godliness and Religion, and he may think that a Zeal to reform others may be more seen and talk'd of, and make a greater Shew and Noise in the World, than the greatest Exactness in his own Life and Conversation would do; but it is certain that it is not true Charity to the Souls of his Neighbours, which prompts him to it, and puts him upon it. For it is not credible that any Man should do that out of true Love to his Neighbour, which he will not do out of Love to himself; for, whatever he may pretend, all the World will believe that he loves himself better

than he does any other Man : and therefore if he does that for his Neighbour which he will not do for himself; they must conclude that he does it not out of Love and Kindness to his Neighbour, but either to gratify his own malicious Humour, or to promote his own worldly Interest. But,

3. As it is every Man's greatest Concern to reform and amend his own Life, to *cast out the Beam out of his own Eye*; so it is in a more especial manner necessary that they should, above all things, be careful to do this, who take upon them to reprove, correct, and reform others; and this was the third thing which I said the Text suggests to our Thoughts, particularly in the 2^d and 3^d Verses of the Text. *How wilt thou say to thy Brother, Let me pull out the Mote out of thine Eye, and behold a Beam is in thine own Eye? Thou Hypocrite, cast out first the Beam out of thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.*

How

*How wilt thou say to thy Brother,
Let me pull out the Mote out of thine
Eye? How wilt thou say it? i. e. With
what Face, or with what Pretence, or
with what Hope of good Success, dost
thou, or canst thou offer thy Help to
correct his Faults, when thou thy self
hast as great, perhaps much greater Faults
of thine own, than those which thou
would'st correct in him?*

(1.) *How wilt thou say to thy Brother,
Let me pull out thy Mote; i. e. with what
Face canst thou say to him these or the
like Words? How canst thou, without
blushing, pretend to see Faults in him,
when thou seest not thine own, which
are as great or greater than his; which,
to all indifferent Persons, appear as plain
or plainer than his do; at least, which
thou thy self knowest, or mayest know,
more certainly than thou canst do his?
How canst thou then, being convicted by
thine own Conscience, (how canst thou,)
without betraying thine own Guilt by thy
Looks, offer to reprove or correct thy*

S 2 Brother,

Brother, who deserves not thy Reproof or Correction more than thou deservest his? As therefore thou wouldst think of him, if he whom thou thinkest so ill of should offer to reprove thee, so believe that he now thinks of thee, who takest upon thee to correct him: he cannot but think that the Office thou undertakest is such as is, of all, the unfittest for thee to undertake: he cannot but stand amazed to see Vice so bold in correcting Sin. Consider therefore well those Words of the *Apostle*, and they will make thee not only blush but tremble, in *Rom. ii. 1, 2, 3.* *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O Man, whosoever thou art, that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self; for thou that judgest dost the same things.* But we are sure that the Judgment of God is according to Truth, against them which commit such things. *And thinkest thou this, O Man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the Judgment of God?* But,

(2.) How

(2.) *How wilt thou say to thy Brother, let me pull out the Mote out of thine Eye?*
i. e. *With what Pretence canst thou speak after this manner? What Reason canst thou offer for thy undertaking this Office?* Wilt thou own, (as 'tis most probable the Truth is;) that thou dost it out of Pride and Arrogance, and Self-Conceit? That thou endeavourest to put him to Shame, that so he and others may think the better of thee? Or that thou chusest this as the easiest way of making some Shew and Appearance of Religion; it being much easier to find Faults in others than 'tis to avoid them our selves? These Reasons of thy offering to pull the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye, (tho' 'tis most likely they are the true Reasons of it, yet are such as) I presume, thou wilt not own. What plausible Reason then canst thou pretend for it? For if thou sayest thou doest it out of a Zeal for God's Honour, it will be obvious to reply, that he who dishonours God himself, as every wicked Man does, of what sort or kind soever his Wicked-

ness be, can't be reasonably suppos'd to have a true Concern for his Honour; or if thou sayest, (which is, I think, the only other plausible Pretence for it,) that thou dost it in Discharge of thy own Duty, and out of true Charity to thy Neighbour, the Falseness and Vanity of this Pretence is no less manifest than of the other: for who can believe a Man truly conscientious in the Discharge of one single Duty, when he sees him notoriously negligent in many others? Or who can believe that any Man loves his Neighbour more truly and cordially than he loves himself; which yet it must be supposed thou dost, if indeed thy Reproof and Correction of thy Neighbour be the Effect of thy Charity to his Soul, while yet thou hast not so much Charity for thy own Soul, as to take any Care, or to be at any Pains to save it from eternal Ruin. Or,

(3.) *How wilt thou say to thy Brother, let me pull out the Mote out of thine Eye?* These Words may be thus understood, viz., as if our Saviour had said, *with what Hope*

Hope of good Success dost thou take upon thee to reprove and correct others for those Faults of which thou thy self art no less guilty than they; or while thou thy self art guilty of any other, as great or greater Sins, than those which thou wouldst reform in them? What good Effect, I say, can it be hoped thy Reproof should have upon them? Who will endure a Physician undertaking his Cure, who is himself sick of the same Disease? Or what other Answer canst thou expect to thy Reproofs, but such Words as these, *who made thee a Judge? Physician, heal thy self;* or those Words of the *Apostle,* Rom. ii. 19--24. *Thou art confident that thou thy self art a Guide of the blind, a Light of them that are in Darkness, an Instructor of the foolish, a Teacher of Babes, which hast a Form of Knowledge and of Truth in the Law. Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thy self? Thou that teachest a Man, should not steal; dost thou steal? Thou that sayest, a Man should not commit Adultery; dost thou commit Adultery?*

ry? Thou that abhorrest Idols, dost thou commit Sacrilege? Thou that makest thy Boast of the Law, thro' breaking the Law dishonourest thou God? For the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles thro' you. And this indeed is the Fruit and Effect, that the justest Reproof or Admonition, out of the Mouth of a Man who is guilty of the same, or as great Faults himself, as those which he corrects in others, is like to have. It not only renders the Reprover himself ridiculous, and more liable to censure than he would otherwise be; but it reflects also a Reproach upon Religion; it makes the Enemies of God to blaspheme; it opens the Mouths of Atheists to cry down all Religion as Trick and Cheat, as a Form taken up only to keep Fools in awe, and to serve a Turn.

Thus it appears, that tho' it be indeed a Matter of the greatest Concern to all, to keep, in all things, *a Conscience void of Offence, both towards God and towards Man*, there being no just Ground of rejoicing in our own Minds, or of entertaining

taining a good Confidence towards God, but only the *Testimony of our Conscience*, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity we have had our Conversation in the World; yet that it is a Duty more especially incumbent upon them who take upon them to reprove and correct others, to take special Care that their own Behaviour be in all Points blameless and unreprouable. *How wilt thou say to thy Brother, Let me pull out the Mote out of thine Eye, and behold a Beam is in thine own Eye.* And this was the third thing which I noted from the Text.

And from what hath been said on this Head, we may observe, by way of Inference,

1. The strict Obligation which lies on Ministers to shew themselves exemplary in their Life and Behaviour, and to walk so prudently and cautiously that they may not justly be upbraided with any Fault; and that for this Reason, because it is their Duty. A great part it is of their Office, to instruct others, and, as
there

there is Occasion, either secretly or openly to reprove and rebuke them; but their Instructions will be of little Use, and their Reproofs, how just and reasonable soever, will be all lost and thrown away, or else redound to their own Shame and Re-proach, unless they take heed to their Life, as well as to their Doctrine, and are careful to shew themselves, in all things, *Patterns of good Works.* For the same Reason also,

2. All Magistrates, and Officers of Justice, are bound to shew good Example to all under their Charge; for 'tis their special Duty, (and that for which Governors and Government were ordain-ed by God;) to punish all Vice and Wic-kedness in their Subjects, to be a Terror to evil Doers, and to cut off with the Sword of Justice such as are intolerable for their Violence and Injustice, and will not be persuaded to lead quiet and peace-able Lives, in Godliness and Honesty. But with what Face can Magistrates cor-rect and punish those Vices and Immora-lities

lities in their Subjects, of which they themselves do give them Example? How can they, without trembling, make Use of the Sword of Justice wherewith they are intrusted, to cut off the Workers of Iniquity, when they consider that they themselves have done the same things, and do deserve no less to be cut off; and that that God, who has committed the Use of the Sword to them for a short time, has still reserved the Propriety thereof to himself; that they are as answerable for all their Crimes to him, as their Subjects are to them, and that *there is no Respect Persons with God.* Again,

3. From hence likewise all Parents, all Masters and Heads of Families, may learn, how strictly they also are, for the same Reason, obliged to behave themselves wisely and unblameably before their Children and Servants. For if they suffer any Wickedness in their Families, which it is in their Power to prevent, the Blame thereof will, in great Measure,

Measure, lie upon them. An Example of God's Justice, upon which Account you may see, in old *Eli*, 1 Sam. iii. 13. *I have told him*, says God, *that I will judge his House for ever; for the Iniquity which he knoweth, because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* But how should a Master of a Family restrain his Children or his Servants, from doing vile and wicked things, while he himself is as vile as they? How can a Father, with a good Face, I had almost said with a good Conscience, rebuke his Son for that Drunkenness or Intemperance, that Swearing or Prophaneness, which he first learn'd from his Example? Or how can a Master be angry with his Servant for cheating him, for his own Advantage, when he himself had before instructed and encouraged him to cheat and defraud others for his Master's Profit? All Reproof is unbecoming out of the Mouth of a wicked Person; and when once a Man debases himself, to do vile and wicked things in the Presence of his Inferiors, he

he forthwith loses all that Authority over them which God and Nature had given him. But,

4. Lastly; the Consideration of what hath been said is yet of more general Use; for from hence we may all learn (whatever our Place and Station in the World is, or whatever Relation we bear to others; from hence, I say, we may all learn) how necessary it is for us to lead our Lives unblameably and unreproveably. For it is every Man's Duty, as he has Opportunity, to reprove his Brother, and not to suffer Sin upon him; and by not reproving others for their Sins, when there is a proper Time and Season for it, we become Partakers with them in their Sins: but no Man can ever reprove another with Authority and Efficacy, while he is liable to have his Reproof turned upon himself, and to have that Blame, whether for the same or for any other Crimes, retorted back upon him, which he throws upon others.

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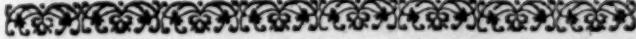
For this, by the way, must be noted, and with noting it I shall put an End to my Discourse upon these Words; that after all which hath been said now, or in any former Discourse, against judging and censuring others; nothing which hath been said is to be construed as if it were a Sin to reprove others, as well our Equals as our Inferiors; nay, and if Need be, and a proper Opportunity be offered, our Superiors too. So far is this from being a Sin, that it is a necessary and indispensable Duty, and often-times the only Method we can take to avoid being accessory to those Sins of others which we have Knowledge of. It was not therefore our *Saviour's* Design, in this Prohibition of uncharitable Judging, to discourage the most charitable and Christian Duty of Reproof; but what he meant was to put us into the best Method of discharging it with Credit and Authority, and good Success; and this we shall do, if we observe the Direction which he gives in the last Verse of the

Text

Text: *First cast out the Beam out of
thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see
clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy
Brother's Eye.*

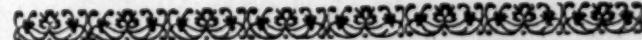


C A U.



CAUTIONS

Requisite in Reproving.



VOL. VII.

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DISCOURSE LXXIII.

Cautions requisite in reproving.



MATTH. vii. 6.

*We not that which is holy unto
the Dogs, neither cast ye your
Pearls before Swine, lest they
trample them under their Feet,
and turn again and rent you.*



OUR Saviour, in the five fore-going Verses of this Chapter, had been treating of rash and uncharitable judging and censuring others : this he did, in the former

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part of the first Verse, universally prohibit, *judge not*; and in the latter part of that, and in the following Verses, he first enforced his Prohibition of judging by two Arguments: the first taken from the Consideration of the Danger to which rash and uncharitable Judgment exposes those who are guilty of it, of being themselves severally judged both by God and Men, *judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what Judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what Measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again* the other from our Incompetency to be Judges of others, who are our selves guilty before God, and must our selves undergo his Judgment; *why beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but considerest not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?* And after this he has prescribed, both as a necessary Duty in it self, and also as a good Means or Remedy to cure our Proneness to judge others, that we should examine well our own Behaviour, make just Reflections on our own Life, and use our utmost Endeavour

deavour to amend and reform that; the Consequence of which will be, that, first, we shall have little Time or Leisure left to trouble our selves about other Men's Lives, farther than our own Duty obliges us to it: and, secondly, that having first reformed our selves, we shall be in a better Capacity to discern what Faults there are in our Brother which need Amendment, and by what Means we may best be helpful to him in amending the same: *How wilt thou say to thy Brother, let me pull out the Mote out of thine Eye, and behold a Beam is in thine own Eye? Thou Hypocrite, first cast out the Beam out of thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.*

And that Advice of our Saviour's, (subjoined to his universal Prohibition of rash and uncharitable judging; that Advice, I say, of our Saviour's,) *first cast out the Beam out of thine own Eye, together with the Reason whereby it is enforced, then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye,* gave me

T 3 Occasion

Occasion to note, (as I did, at the Conclusion of my Discourse the last Time upon those Words;) that tho' it be a Sin to judge and censure our Brother rashly or uncharitably, it is not a Sin to endeavour his Reformation and Amendment. Charity indeed restrains us from judging our Brother guilty of those Sins which we do not see, or which we are not fully assured he has been guilty of: Charity also restrains us from magnifying and aggravating those Faults which we do see, or are fully assured of; and what Faults soever he hath done, and how many and great soever they be, Charity will not permit us to judge and reprobate him, or to pass Sentence of Condemnation upon him whom, as being our Brother, we should rather heartily commend to the Grace and Favour of Almighty God, earnestly praying that he may obtain Repentance and Pardon. But Charity does not oblige us not to see the Faults which our Brother hath committed, if they be open and manifest: it does not oblige us, when we do see them, to concern our selves no far

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ther about them; but rather, it obliges us to do what we can to convince him of the Danger he is in, while he continues in his Sin; to persuade him to Repentance, and to assist him in it. This is clearly intimated in those Words of our *Saviour*, *then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye*; 'tis plainly intimated, I say, in those Words, that we may, if we are in a Capacity of doing it, endeavour to pull the Mote out of our Brother's Eye; *i. e.* to amend and reform even the least Miscarriages which we happen to spy out in the Life and Conversation of our Brother, and much rather, that we may, as the *Apostle* expresses it, *pull out of the Fire* those who are in imminent Danger of being consumed by it; *i. e.* use our utmost Endeavour to bring to a Sight and Sense of their Sin and Danger, such as live in a Course of notorious and scandalous Sin, of whom, if they should persist and die in the wicked Course they are in, we could not entertain any good Hope.

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But then, that we may be able to discharge well this Duty of the greatest Charity to the Souls of others, our *Saviour* here gives us two Cautions; one respecting our selves, the other those whom we undertake the Reformation of.

The Caution respecting our selves, is, that before we undertake to reform others, we should be very careful that our own Life and Conversation be unblameable and unreprovable; and this Caution he gives in the Verse before the Text, on which I discoursed the last Time; *thou Hypocrite, first cast out the Beam out of thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.* In which Words 'tis implied, 1. That the greatest Shew and Appearance of Zeal to reform and amend others, while yet at the same time we neglect our selves, or allow our selves in the Practice of any known Sin, is not the Effect of true Religion; *i. e.* either of Piety towards God, or of Charity towards our Neighbour; but is mere Dissimulation and Hypocrify, a Form of Godliness without the Power of it;

it: *thou Hypocrite, cast out first the Beam of thine own Eye.* And, 2. That till we have well reform'd our selves, we are not like to undertake the Reformation of others to any good Purpose; but that when we have first amended all which was amiss in our selves, we shall be then in a good Capacity to undertake the Reformation of others, and may undertake it with good Hope of Success; *then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.*

The other Caution here given us, and which respects those whom we undertake the Reformation of, is in the Words of the Text, of which I am now to discourse; *Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you.*

The Meaning of which Words (if we understand them in the most restrained Sense, in that Sense which, according to the Connexion that is between them and the foregoing Words, seems to be primarily intended;) is this; that tho' it be a general

general Duty of Charity to pull out the Mote out of our Brother's Eye, that is, to endeavour his Reformation and Amendment; we are not, however, obliged to bestow this Labour of Love on those upon whom we are satisfyed it will do no good; especially, if their Temper be such that we may very reasonably think that our Endeavours to reform them will, not only do them no Good, but provoke them to do us Harm; *Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you.* Or,

2. We may understand the Words in a somewhat larger Sense, *viz.* as meaning, by the mention of this one Instance of Prudence in our Reproof or Admonition of an offending Brother, to prescribe the general Use of Prudence in this Matter; and that we should always take Care so to suit those Methods which we take to reform others, to the Temper and Disposition of those whom we seek to reform, as that,

that, if it be possible, we may effect their Reformation; because otherwise, *i. e.* if we have not a prudent Consideration of their Tempers and Dispositions, the Labour which we bestow in endeavouring to correct their Faults, may have a quite contrary Effect to what we hoped; *i. e.*, may harden them in their Sin, instead of bringing them to Repentance; and may likewise provoke them to treat us as their Enemies, while they interpret our indiscreet Zeal to reform them, as an Expression of our Hatred and Enmity to them.

Or,

3. And lastly; the Words of the Text being a general proverbial Expression, cited indeed by our *Saviour* upon a particular Occasion, but not by him expressly applied, much less appropriated thereto: (for the Application thereof, to the Purpose for which he used it, being so very easy, it was enough for him only to mention the *Proverb* it self, leaving it to his Hearers to make the Application; *Give not that which is holy unto Dogs*, neither

ther cast ye your Pearls before Swine.
The Advice, I say, being given only in a general proverbial Expression,) and the Nature of Proverbs being generally such, that they may be fitly used upon several Occasions, and aptly applyed to more Purposes than one; it is reasonable to understand the Words of the Text in a still larger Sense; *viz.* as design'd to order and command us to have a like prudent Consideration of the Temper and Disposition of the Persons we haye to deal with, in all other Matters and Cafes wherein Religion is concerned, as well as in the Case of Reproof or Correction of an offending Brother; and so to order our Conversation when we happen to be in Company, or to have to deal with such Men as are here meant, by *Dogs* and *Swine*, as neither to expose Religion to Contempt, nor our selves to needless Dangers and Persecutions. *Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you.*

I shall

I shall briefly speak to the Words taken in each of these three Senses.

I. Then; *Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine.* The strict Meaning of these Words (if we understand them in the most restrained Sense, in that Sense which, according to the Connexion that is between them and the foregoing Words, seems to be primarily intended,) I told you, is this; that tho' it be a general Duty of Charity, to pull out the Mote out of our Brother's Eye, that is, to endeavour his Reformation and Amendment; we are not, however, obliged to bestow this Labour of Love upon those Men, on whom we are satisfyed it will do no good; especially if their Tempers are such, that we may not only reasonably despair of their Recovery, but likewise justly fear that our Endeavours to reform them will provoke them to do us Hurt; *lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you.*

This

This, I say, seems to be the prime Meaning of the Words; for our *Saviour*, in the Words just before, had not only granted that we may, so far as our Ability extends, endeavour to reform the Lives and Manners of other Men, as well as our own; but had prescribed an excellent Means to put us into the best Capacity of doing it with good Success; viz. by beginning first with our selves; *Cast out first the Beam out of thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.* And then it follows immediately, *give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine.*

It is plain, therefore, (supposing these Words to belong to the same Subject which had been just before spoken of,) that the *holy thing* which we are not to give unto the *Dogs*, and the *Pearls* which we are not to cast before *Swine*, are good Advice, wholsome Admonition, friendly Reproof, or whatever other Means are proper to be taken and used by us, in order to the reforming our Brother. It only

ly remains then that we enquire, who are the *Swine* before whom we are not to cast these *Pearls*, and who are the *Dogs* to whom we are not to give these *holy things*; because if we do the former, they will *trample* the *Pearls under their Feet*; and if we do the latter, *the Dogs will turn again and rent us*. And,

1. By the *Swine*, before whom we are not to cast these *Pearls*, it is most obvious to understand those Men, who, (as *Swine*, whose Nature it is to delight to wallow in the *Mire*, and who have no Understanding or Apprehension of any thing which is better or more excellent than that filthy *Mire* which they wallow in; those Men, I say, who in this Respect like *Swine*,) are led captive by their Lusts, and can be made to have no Sense or Relish of any Pleasure, but such as is brutish and sensual; who by a long Custom of sinning have made it to become their Nature, and by the open and notorious Wickedness of their Lives, have their Modesty quite worn off, and their *Consciences*

sciences fear'd, as it were with an hot Iron. On such as these we need not bestow any Pains in advising, admonishing, or reprehending them, because all the Pains we can bestow will be to no Purpose; for Swine will be Swine, and there is no Remedy for it. The proper Method to be taken with such as these, if they be not in the Church, is to neglect them; or if they are in the Church, *i. e.* do make an outward Profession of the Christian Faith, and have been admitted within the Pale of the Church by the Sacrament of Baptism, the best Course to be taken with them, for their Amendment, if their Amendment be possible, or, if it be not, then to hinder the Infection from proceeding farther, is to exercise the Discipline of the Church upon them, and to cast them out of the Church as rotten Members, by the Sentence of Excommunication. Or if this Piece of ancient Discipline cannot be duly exercis'd, (as it were much to be wish'd it could be;) then to note such Men, and to have no Company with them, that so both they may
be

be ashamed, if they be not quite past Shame, of those evil Deeds which they see make them unfit for the Company and Conversation of the wise and sober part of Mankind; and others, who have an Inclination to follow the same evil Courses, may be deterred and kept back from doing it, by the Consideration of that Shame and Reproach which it will bring upon them. And to this Purpose the *Apostle* gives this Advice to the *Corinthians*, i Cor. v. 11. *I have written unto you not to keep Company; if any Man that is called a Brother be a Fornicator, or covetous, or an Idolater; or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with such an one no not to eat;* i. e. at least, if he was notorious for these Sins, if he practis'd them openly, and without Shame, and was deaf to all Admonition and good Advice: after this, the proper Course to be taken with such an one, was to cast him out of the Church; and, 'till that was done, to shun his Company, and have no Conversation or Dealing with him. And to the same Purpose our *Saviour* di-

rects; in *Matth. xviii. 17.* that if any Man continued obstinate and incorrigible, after all fit Methods had been used to reclaim him, both by private Reproof and publick Admonition, we should concern our selves no farther about him, unless it were to avoid his Company. *If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen Man, and a Publican.* Such obstinate and hardened Sinners may perhaps, being *delivered up unto Satan,* (as the Apostle speaks of *Hymenæus* and *Alexander,* *1 Tim. i. 20.* whom he had excommunicated,) *learn not to blaspheme:* or tho' their Consciences at present are hard and callous, yet they may hereafter be soften'd by Affliction; or tho' at present they are so stupid and lethargical as to be insensible of any thing which is spoken or done to them, they may yet, some time hence, be roused and awaken'd by a heavy Judgment of God; and whenever they shall seem capable of hearing Reason, it will be proper then to try to convince them of the Folly and Danger of their Sin, and to bring them
to

to Repentance: but till then our Labour will be lost upon them, and we had better not throw away that Pains upon them which may be better bestow'd elsewhere. While they continue Swine, they will do as Swine do, they will trample under their Feet the most precious and valuable things, while at the same time they suck in, and snuff up, the nasty Mire which they wallow in, with Greediness and Delight. *Cast not your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet.*

And,

2. By those *Dogs*, to whom we are not to give holy things, it is likewise very obvious to understand such Men as are of a fierce and fiery Disposition, and who cannot bear with any Patience the least thing which they account a Slight or Disrespect, and are withal so wedded to their Lusts, and so conceited of the Wisdom of their own Ways, that they reckon those their greatest Enemies who plainly tell them the Truth; and as they account them, so they deal

U 2 with

with them, grinning and snarling, like Dogs, at any who give them good Advice; and if that will not make them leave, then falling upon them with Violence, endeavouring to tear and rend them; and stirring up, and setting on others to persecute and destroy them.

Such Dogs were, for the most part, the unbelieving Jews in our Saviour's and his Apostles Times, who are therefore sometimes in Scripture called Dogs, Phil. iii. 2. for their Lives were filthy and impure, and therefore they would not endure sound Doctrine, Rev. xxii. 15. And they not only rejected the Gospel themselves, killing the Lord Jesus, and their own Prophets, and persecuting the Apostles, 1 Thess. ii. 15. but they likewise forbade them to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their Sins alway. And whenever the Apostles had any where preached to the Gentiles with good Success, the Jews always stirred up the Magistrates and the People against them, persecuting them from City to City, and permitting them no where

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to abide quietly. Several Instances of which are noted by St. Luke, in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Thus it was at *Antioch*, *Acts* xiii. 50. when many Gentiles had been converted by the Preaching of St. Paul, the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable Women, and the chief Men of the City, and raised Persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their Coasts. Thus also it was at *Icanium*, whither they next went, *Acts* xiv. 2. When the Apostles had so spake in the Synagogue, that a great Multitude both of the Jews, and also of the Gentiles, believed; the unbelieveing Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their Minds evil affected towards the Brethren. And the same happen'd again at *Lystra*, the next Place they went to, as you may see at the 19th ¶. of that Chapter: There came thither certain Jews from *Antioch* and *Iconium*, who persuaded the People to stone Paul: and afterwards, at *Theffalonica*, *Acts* xvii. 5. where it is said, that many believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of

the devout Greeks a great Multitude, and of the chief Women not a few; but the Jews which believed not, moved with Envy, took unto them certain lewd Fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a Company, and set all the City on an Uproar. And many other Instances there are, in that History, of the Rage and Malice of the Jews against the Apostles, for no other Reason but only because their Doctrine was too pure and spiritual to be relish'd or entertain'd by such a carnal, sensual, and worldly People as they were.

Thus did they truly resemble the Dogs here spoken of, who understanding not the Value and Excellency of holy things, not only refuse to receive them when offered, but are enraged at those who offer them. And therefore, according to the Direction here given by our Saviour, *give not that which is holy unto the Dogs:* so the Apostles practis'd: they first indeed offered the Words of Life to the Jews in every Place where they came, but finding how perverse and obstinate, and how fierce and furious they generally were, they

they quickly gave them over, and directed their Discourse to others who were in better Disposition to receive it. Thus, *Acts xiii. 45, 46.* *When the Jews saw the Multitudes they were filled with Envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming;* then *Paul and Barnabas waxed bold,* and said, *It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yur selves unworthy of everlasting Life, lo we turn to the Gentiles.* And thus again, *Acts xviii. 6.* *When the Jews opposed themselves, and blasphemed, Paul shook his Rayment, and said unto them, Your Blood be upon your own Heads; I am clean, from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*

And such as the Jews generally were, in the Apostles times, deservedly call'd *Dogs,* because they had no Relish of that heavenly Doctrine which was preach'd by the *Apostles,* and were violently enraged against those who endeavoured to convince them of their Errors, and to bring them

to Repentance; such are, at all times, Men of the same corrupt Minds, and fierce and furious Temper which they were of; who in Scripture are often expressed by the Name of *Scorners*: upon such Men, while they continue of that Temper, all good Advice or Reproof will be thrown away; and therefore 'tis to no Purpose to give it. Such, the more Pains we take to reform them, will be but the more furious and enraged against us; they will but turn again, and rent us, for offering them that which of all things they have the greatest Aversion to; and therefore 'tis the wisest way to let them alone to themselves, to know their Bones, and to swallow up again their own Vomit; for Dogs they are, and as Dogs they will do. And thus 'twas observed by *Solomon* long before, *Prov. xxiii. 9. Speak not in the Ears of a Fool, for he will despise the Wisdom of thy Words.* And again, *Prov. ix. 7, 8. He that reproveth a Scorer, getteth himself Shame, and he that rebuketh a wicked Man, getteth himself*

*himself a Blot. Reprove not a Scowler,
lest he hate thee.*

But here now perhaps it will be asked, how the Caution here given us, *not to give that which is holy unto the Dogs, nor to cast our Pearls before Swine*, (if it be understood as meant of Reproof and good Advice, not to be given to such as are not capable of receiving it;) is consistent with some other Precepts in holy Scripture, which seem to enjoin the contrary; such as that given to *Timothy*, by St. *Paul*, in *2 Tim. ii. 25*. *In Meekness instruct those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the Acknowledgment of the Truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the Snare of the Devil, who are taken Captive by him at his Will.* For by this Precept it should seem that we ought never to despair of any Man's Recovery, nor consequently ever give over our Endeavours to reform him; for who can be worse, or less likely to be wrought upon, than such as the *Apostle* there describes, who were entangled in
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the Snare of the Devil, who were taken Captive by him at his Will; and not only so, but who did also set themselves to oppose the Truth, and any good Advice or sober Admonition which could be given them? And yet these the *Apostle* directs *Timothy* to instruct with all Meekness, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the Acknowledgment of the Truth. The Apostles indeed, who, with divers other miraculous Gifts, had also that of discerning Spirits, 1 Cor. xii. 10, and were often made acquainted, by special Revelation, with the inward Tempers and Dispositions of those whom they preached to, *Acts* xxii. 18, had Reason not to lose time with those, upon whom they certainly knew before hand all their Labour would be lost; but we, who have not this Knowledge, should believe and hope the best of every Man, and so make it our Business, as St. *Paul* exhorts *Timothy*, 2 Tim. iv. 2. to be instant in Season and out of Season, and to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all Long-suffering; according to that general Rule of Prudence

Prudence given by the wise Man, *Eccles.* xi. 6. which 'tis as reasonable to observe in this, as in other Cases; *In the Morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening with-hold not thine Hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

And thus much indeed must be granted, that whereas if we knew before-hand what would be the Success of our Advice or Reproof, we should not need ever to give it to such as we were assured would not receive it. Now that we do not know this before-hand, we ought to hope the best, and, according to the Direction before-cited, should *reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all Long-suffering*; i. e. it is not reasonable that we should give over our Endeavour to reform our Brother, only because it has been once or twice, or thrice unsuccessful; for the same Admonition which has availed nothing at one time, may avail much at another. We are not therefore, I say, to presume that any Man's Case is desperate, 'till after we have
made

made long and frequent Trial of him; and we are also to make a Difference between those who will hear Advice, tho' they do not follow it; and those who reject, with Scorn and Disdain, whatever is said to them that is sober and serious: between those who will take Reproof, tho' they are not yet reformed by it, and perhaps never will; and those, who if you offer to reprove them for any thing, tho' never so deservedly, have no Patience to bear it, but immediately fly in the Face of their Reprover, and return Hatred to him, in all the worst Expressions of it, for his great good Will to them. And those of the first sort, *i. e.* who will hear Advice, and who will take Reproof, are not to be neglected or given over, but are to be admonish'd with all Meekness and Long-suffering, tho' they shew as yet no Signs of real Amendment: but as for those of the latter sort, who receive whatever is said to them with Scorn and Disdain, who declare themselves resolved not to alter their wicked Course, and seem bent upon doing all the Mischief they can

to

to those who express the greatest Kindness to them ; such as these may well be given over as desperate, and 'tis but a Mispence of Time, and a Loss of Labour, to attempt their Reformation, while they continue of this refractory, incorrigible, and furious Temper. To bestow good Advice, or grave Reproof, upon such as these, is no better, nor to any more Purpose, than to *cast Pearls before Swine*, who, knowing not their Worth, will *tread them under their Feet*; or than to give *that which is holy unto the Dogs*, who finding it not such a thing as they expected, will be enraged by the Disappointment, and turn back, and furiously fly upon and tear the Person who threw it to them. And so much may serve to have been spoken of the Words taken in their prime Meaning, viz. as directing us to have some Consideration of the Nature and Temper of the Persons whom we endeavour to reform, and not to bestow our Labour where there is no Hope of Success.

But

But I noted farther, in the second Place,

II. That we may understand the Words in a somewhat larger Sense, *viz.* as designing, by the Mention of this one Instance of Prudence in our Reproof or Admonition of an offending Brother, to prescribe the general Use of Prudence in this Matter; and that we should always take care so to suit those Methods which we take to reform others, to the Temper and Disposition of those whom we seek to reform, as that, if it be possible, we may effect their Reformation; because otherwise, *i. e.* if we have not a prudent Consideration of their Tempers and Dispositions, the Labour, which we bestow in endeavouring to correct their Faults, may have a quite contrary Effect to what we hoped, may harden them in their Sin, instead of bringing them to Repentance; and may likewise provoke them to treat us as their Enemies, while they interpret our indiscreet Zeal to reform them, as an Instance

stance and Expression of our Hatred and Enmity to them.

It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, as the Apostle says ; and there is nothing which in reason we ought to be more zealous for, next to the Reformation of our own selves, than to reform, so far as lies in us, the Lives and Manners of other Men. But then we ought to take Care that our Zeal do not out-run our Discretion, and that we chuse such Means for the Attainment of the good End we aim at, as are most proper and likely to effect it ; particularly, for to mention all the Rules of Prudence and Discretion proper to be observed in the Reproof or Correction of others, would be Matter enough for a whole Discourse. I shall at present mention only this one, which the Words of the Text do readily suggest to us ; viz. that as we should not give holy Things to Dogs, nor cast Pearls before Swine ; so by the same Reason we should not use as Swine, nor treat as Dogs, those Men, who, tho' Sinners, yet are not Sinners to such a Degree, as that they

they may justly be called *Swine*, or *Dogs*.

I mean this: We should not treat a young, a yet modest Sinner, in such a Manner as we would do an old and incorrigible Offender; but at the same time that we seek to reform him, we should have a due Regard to his good Name and Reputation, and endeavour, by all means, to preserve in him that Sense and Fear of Shame which he has yet upon him: And the way to preserve in him those Remains of Modesty and Shamefac'dness which are still left, is not to put him to Shame, if it can possibly be avoided; not to make his Crime more publick by our Reproof or Admonition, or by any other Method that we take to reform him, than it was in its first Commission. Those indeed who sin openly, are to be openly reprov'd and admonish'd; and those who are profligate and shameless, should be publickly punished for an Example and Terror to others, according to the *Apostle's Direction*; *1 Tim. v. 20. Them that sin* (*i. e.* who are scandalous and notorious for their sinful Life)

Life) rebuke before all, that others also may fear; and, indeed, the Correction or Punishment of a hardened Sinner seldom serves for any other Purpose, but only for Example and Terror to others; for there is little Hope that he himself will be better'd by it, who, if he had not been incorrigible before, would hardly ever have sinned himself, as he has done, past all Shame: and now that he is grown shameless, is in a much more hopeless and desperate Estate than ever he was before. But the Case is otherwise with those who are young Beginners: *Of these*, therefore, (as St. Jude speaks, *Jude 22.*) *we should have Compassion, making a Difference.* And as the End that is proposed in reproving such is different from that which is designed in the Punishment of obstinate and hardened Sinners, so the Means whereby it must be attained is different from that which is used, when the Punishment of one Man is chiefly designed for Example to others, that others also may fear. For should the same Course be taken with a young Beginner that is proper to be ta-

ken with an old and shameless Offender ; should he for his first or second Offence, which perhaps were committed secretly, have a publick Note, or Mark of Infamy, set upon him, the Means which are taken to correct him would probably do more towards the confirming and hardening him in his Wickedness, than even a long Continuance in the same Wickedness would have done : for the most desperate Condition of a Sinner, is when he becomes shameless ; and a Man naturally becomes shameless, by being put to open Shame. So that this is a Course never to be taken with any but such as are past Shame already. But the proper Method to be observed by those who undertake the Reformation of others, out of a true Zeal for God and Goodness, and a hearty Love and Charity to the Souls of thcir Brethren, is that which is prescribed by our Saviour himself in *Math. xviii. 15, &c.* *If thy Brother shall trespass against thee,* i. e. If he shall be an Offence or Scandal to thee by any notorious Act of Sin, *go and tell him his Fault between thee and him*

him alone, *i. e.* admonish him privately, and as privately as thou canst, of his Fault; this is the likeliest Method to reclaim him while as yet he is modest and shamefac'd, while as yet his Conscience is soft and tender: And, says our Saviour, *if he shall bear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother.* And then it follows; *But if he will not bear, i. e.* if after this thy private Admonition of him, he still continues in the Practice of the same Sin, thou mayst admonish him more publickly, but still with a tender Regard to his Modesty, and so as not to shame him more than is absolutely necessary; *then,* says our Saviour, *take with thee one or two more, that in the Mouth of two or three Witnesses every Word may be established:* For 'tis likely enough, that when two or three join together in this private Reproof of an offending Brother, their Reproof may be more effectual than a single Man's was. And then it follows; *And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church, i. e.* if he still continues in the same Sin, thou mayst then acquaint

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the Elders and Governors of the Church with it, who may admonish him with more Authority, and consequently more Efficacy, than any private Members of it could do; and to them it belongs properly to judge of what Nature his Crime is, and what Course is fit to be taken with him, either for his Reformation, if he be corrigible, or for his Punishment, if he be not. And then it follows, in the last place, *But if he will neglect to hear the Church, i. e. if he be so hardened in his Wickedness, as not to be reformed even by publick Admonitions, or Church-Censures, then let him be unto thee as an Heathen Man and a Publican, i. e. thou mayst then give over the Care of him, thou needest not any more admonish him as a Brother; for he then shews himself to be such an one as the Text designs by Swine and Dogs, before whom it is improper to cast Pearls and holy Things.*

This Method here prescrib'd by our *Saviour*, if we observe in our Endeavours to reform our offending Brethren, it may probably be with good Success; and not only

only so, but we may also reasonably hope that our tender Charity to them will provoke them to make a Return of Love to us: This it will certainly do, if, by the prudent Care that we take about them, we can bring them to Repentance and Amendment; for then they will not be able not to love those who have been so very instrumental in saving their Souls from eternal Destruction. But if thro' an imprudent and over-hasty Zeal we invert this Method, and begin at the wrong End of it, *i. e.* if we expose every Brother who is overtaken in a Fault (if we expose him, I say) for his first Offence to the highest Censures of the Church, (if that could be done) or to the Correction of the whipping-Post, or the Stocks, to any ignominious and shameful Punishment, thereby publishing that Fault which before was not publick, it may reasonably be feared that the quite contrary Effects will follow, *i. e.* that we shall neither work his Reformation, nor gain his Love, by this Means, but rather both harden him in his Wickedness, and provoke him to treat us as

his Enemies. For to expose to Shame, a Man who has not yet finned himself past Shame, is the ready Course to make him impudent and shameless, and consequently much harder to be reformed, than he yet is, while he retains, in some good degree, his natural Modesty, and so may be restrained from proceeding in his Wickedness, by the Fear of that Shame which 'tis very likely it will bring him to: for when once that is actually come upon a Man, which he before feared, he then ceases to fear it; so that the Fear of it can then be no longer any Restraint upon him. And he who is handled so very severely for his first or second Offence, by a Person who pretends it is his Desire and Design to reform him, will hardly believe his Pretence, he will hardly be persuaded that it was true Charity which put him upon using such great Severity, when gentler Means and Methods had been manifestly more likely to effect his Design: he will rather think it was Spite, or Malice, or Reyenge, which prompted him to it, and so will be much more likely to revenge

venge it as an Injury, than to acknowledge it as a Kindness. It is good Advice, therefore, which the *Apostle* gives, *Gal. vi. 1.* with which I shall conclude this Head. *Brethren, if any Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye, which are spiritual, restore such an one in the Spirit of Meekness; considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* But,

III. And lastly; the Words of the Text being a general proverbial Expression, cited indeed by our *Saviour* upon a particular Occasion, but not by him expressly applied, much less appropriated thereto: (for the Application thereof, to that Purpose for which he used it, being so very easy, it was enough for him only to mention the Proverb, *Give not that which is holy unto Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine*, leaving it to his Hearers to make the Application; the Advice, I say, being given only in a general proverbial Expression,) and the Nature of Proverbs being generally such, that they may be fitly used upon several

Occasions, and be aptly applyed to more Purposes than one; it is reasonable to understand the Words of the Text in a still larger Sense; *viz.* as design'd by our *Saviour* to order and command us to have a prudent Consideration of the Temper and Disposition of the Persons we have to deal with, in all other Matters or Cases wherein Religion is concerned, as well as in the Case of Reproof or Correction of an offending Brother; and so to order our Conversation when we happen to be in Company, or to have to deal with such Men as are here meant, by *Dogs* and *Swine*, as neither to expose Religion to Contempt, nor our selves to needless Dangers and Persecutions. *Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you.*

The Time will not permit me now to enlarge much upon this Head, and therefore at present I shall only just briefly mention some few other things, which, as well as brotherly Reproof and Admonition,

tion, may be justly deem'd *holy things* and *Pearls*, and are therefore not to be thrown to *Dogs*, or cast before *Swine*, who understand not their Worth, nor will be at all benefitted thereby, but rather the more enraged against us. And,

1. Such is the holy Word of God, or the Doctrine of the Gospel, which therefore tho' commanded by our *Saviour* himself to be preach'd to all, *Mark* xvi. 15. *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature*, yet is not to be forc'd nor pressed upon any but such as are dispos'd and willing to receive it; and therefore to this general Commission there given by our *Saviour* to his Apostles, to preach the Gospel to all, he in other Places adds some Restrictions and Limitations, as in *Matth. x. 11, &c.* *Into whatsoever City or Town ye enter, enquire who in it is worthy;—and when ye come into an House, salute it; and if the House be worthy, let your Peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your Peace return to you. And whosoever*
shall

shall not receive you, and hear your Words, when ye depart out of that House or City, shake off the Dust of your Feet. And according to this Rule the Apostles practised, as has been already noted; for thus, when the Jews at Antioch had contradicted and blasphemed the things spoken by St. Paul, he left them, and turned to the Gentiles. They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting Life, and he approv'd their Judgment, and as such he left them; and when he went thence, *shook off the Dust of his Feet*, as you may see, *Acts xiii. 45, 46, 51.* And the like he did at Corinth, when the Jews opposed themselves, and blasphemed, *he shook his Raiment, and said unto them, your Blood be upon your own Heads,* *Acts xviii. 6.*

2. Such especially are the sublime and mysterious Doctrines of the Gospel, as the Doctrine of the Trinity, and the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the like; they are Doctrines easy to be receiv'd and embraced, upon the Credit of plain divine

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Revelation, by such as are modest and docible; but 'tis not fit to propose them to such as are proud and conceited of their own Knowledge; who think themselves too wise to be taught by God, and will not be persuaded to believe any thing but what they can fathom, and fully comprehend, or give Account of by natural Reason; to preach these Doctrines to such, is no better than *to cast Pearls before Swine*; and only gives them Occasion to open their Mouths wider in Reproach and Blasphemy.

3. The Sacraments of the Gospel are likewise holy things, of singular Use and Comfort to such as are piously and well-disposed, and consider well the Grace of God which accompanies his own holy Institutions; but they are of no Use or Benefit at all to those who look no farther in the Sacraments than to the outward Signs, and to despise them as useless and insignificant Ceremonies. They see not what good the Soul can receive by the Bodies being washed with Water; and they

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they discern not the Lord's Body in the consecrated Bread and Wine. Such therefore as have no other Notion of these holy Rites, than only as of common washing, or ordinary eating and drinking, are not to be invited, nor (if it can be avoided, are they to be) admitted to partake of the holy Sacraments, till they are better instructed in the Nature of them; because till then they will be of no more Use to them, than *Pearls* are to *Swine*; which, not distinguishing them from common Pebbles, they boldly trample under their Feet.

4. And lastly; the Words thus generally understood, *Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine,* may be taken as meaning to advise us to use a prudent Cau-
tion in the publick Profession and Exer-
cise of our Religion in general. Thus, for
Instance, we must be prepared patiently
to undergo any Persecutions, which can-
not be avoided, for the keeping of a good
Conscience; but we are not bound to ex-
pose

pose our selves to Persecutions which may be avoided ; but being *persecuted in one City*, we may, as our *Saviour* directs, *flee into another* ; much less are we bound by any imprudent and unseasonable Expressions of our Zeal for the Truth, to invite Men to persecute and afflict us. This is nothing else but to provoke the *Dogs* to tear and rend us ; and that we need not do, for they will be forward enough to fall upon us, without our provoking and enraging them to do it. And thus again we ought, as St. Peter directs, *1 Epist. iii. 15.* to be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope that is in us, with Meekness and Fear ; i. e. whenever we are called to it, we should make a bold and open Confession of our Faith and Religion, whatever may be the Consequence of it. But at other times, when we are not called to it, and when our publick owning the Faith and Religion we are of, is not likely to do good, and may probably be Occasion of much Harm to our selves, or to our Christian Brethren, or to our Religion;

gion; it may be better to conceal what we are. (I mean, not by Denial, or any sinful Compliance, but only by Silence and Secrecy;) 'till a better Opportunity shall be offered of making a publick Profession thereof.

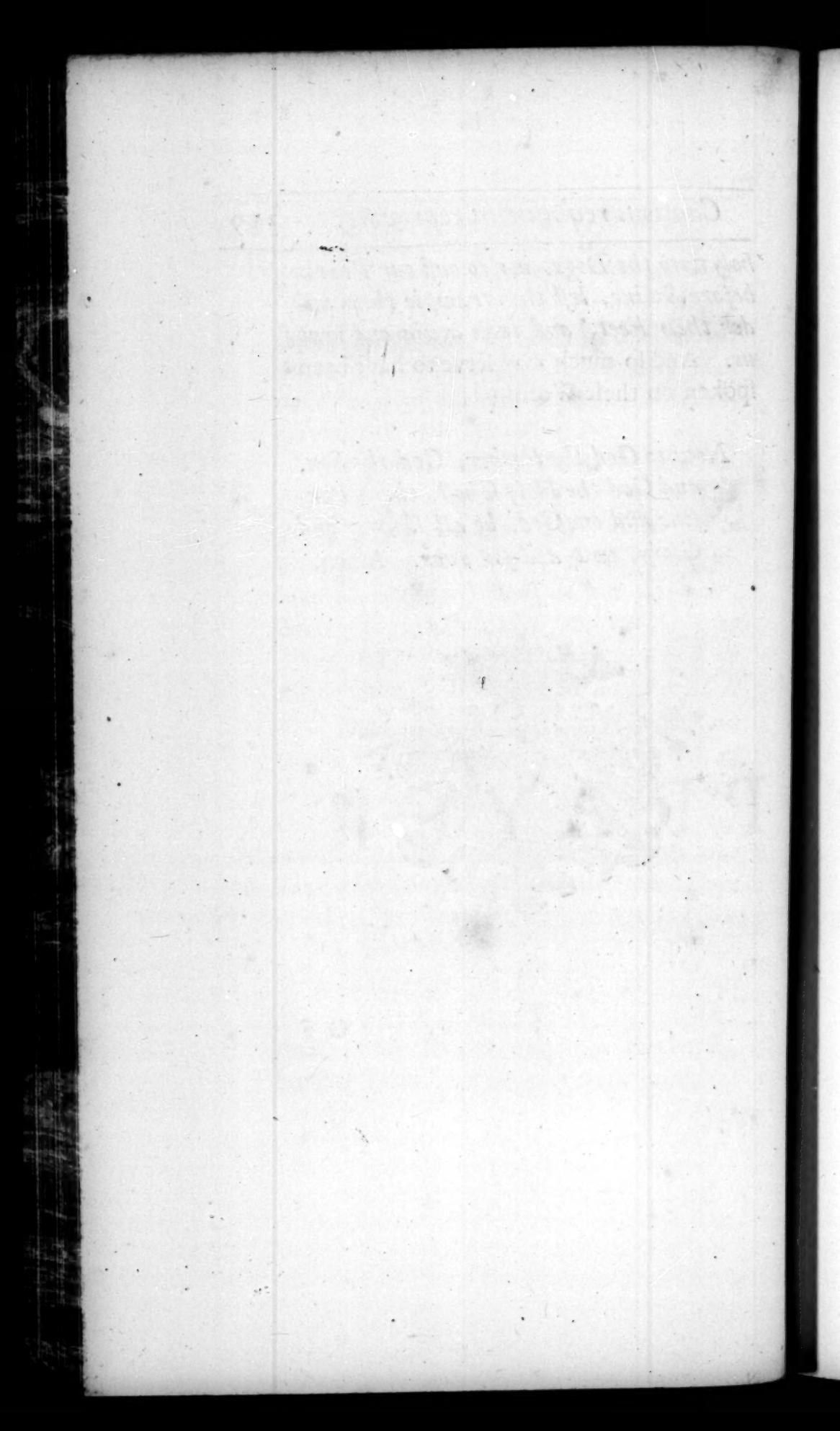
And several other Cases of the like Nature I might instance in, if the Time would permit; but the Sum of all which needs be said upon this Head, is fully comprehended in those Words of our Saviour, Matth. x. 16. *Behold I send you forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves; be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves;* i. e. our first and chiefest Care ought always to be, to be *innocent as Doves*; i. e. never to omit a necessary Duty in its proper Season, nor by any worldly Fears or Hopes to be drawn into any sinful Compliance. But after that Care is taken, we may use all the Art and Policy we are Masters of, that is consistent with Innocence, to save our selves from Harm; we may likewise be *wise as Serpents*; for 'tis not only our Prudence, but our Duty, *not to give that which is holy*

holy unto the Dogs, nor to cast our Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent us. And so much may serve to have been spoken on these Words.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Ghost, three Persons
and one God, be all Honour and
Glory, now and for ever. Amen.*



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OF THE
NATURE
AND
DUTY
OF
PRAYER.

VOL. VII.

V



DISCOURSE LXXIV.

Of the Nature and Duty of Prayer.

MATTH. vii. 7, 8.

Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

T is hard to observe or conceive
any Connexion between these
Words and the foregoing, and I
suppose there is none ; but that our Savi-

our here began to treat of a new Subject, and design'd to instruct his Hearers in the Nature, and to persuade them to the due and constant Exercise of the great Duty of Prayer. And the same shall be also my Design in discoursing upon them. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find, &c.*

In discoursing on these Words, I shall,

I. Speak somewhat, in general, concerning the Duty of Prayer, and our Obligation to practise it. *Ask, and it shall be given you.*

“ II. I shall discourse more particularly
“ concerning those two Qualifications of
“ a prevailing Prayer, which are intima-
“ ted in the Text; viz. 1. That it be
“ earnest and urgent: and, 2. That it be
“ constant and importunate; the former
“ is implied in the Word *seek; seek, and*
“ *ye shall find.* For to *seek* a thing, im-
“ plies greater Earnestness and Desire to
“ have it, than is implied just in asking
“ for it. And the latter is implied in the
Word

“ Word knock; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For when a Man knocks at the Door of an House, he does not use to give one knock only, and so go his way, but he continues knocking till the Door be opened.”

And,

III. I shall discourse somewhat concerning the Success and Efficacy of urgent and importunate Prayer; *ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For, &c.*

I. I shall discourse somewhat in general, concerning the Duty of Prayer, and our Obligation to practise it; *ask, seek, and knock. Ask, and it shall be given you, &c.*

And what I think needful to say, concerning the Duty of Prayer in general, I shall reduce to these following Heads.

1. I shall briefly declare the Nature of Prayer, or shew what Prayer is.

2. I shall shew the Obligation which lies upon us to practise the Duty. And,

3. I shall then briefly mention the several Sorts and Kinds of Prayer, and subjoin the particular Reasons obliging to each of them.

1. I shall briefly declare the Nature of Prayer, or shew what Prayer is.

And all Acts of divine Worship, *Invocation*, *Confession*, and *Thanksgiving*, as well as *Petition*, are usually comprehended under the Word *Prayer*. But nevertheless, what is properly meant by the Word, and what the Text leads me to discourse chiefly of, is only Petition.

And Petition is the Desire of our Soul, for the obtaining of some good thing which we want, directed to God, whom we believe able to bestow the same upon us. This is the Definition of *Prayer*, properly so call'd; the Parts of which Definition being briefly explain'd, will be a sufficient

cient Account of the Nature of Prayer in general.

(1.) Then, I say, that Prayer is the *Desire* of the *Soul*; and this part of the Definition declares the Form or the Es-
sence of Prayer, that it consists in an *in-
ward Desire* of the thing prayed for; and
not in Words, Place, or Posture, or any
other outward Expression or Circumstance
of Devotion. For a Man may be upon
his Knees, the Posture of Praying, or he
may be in the Church, the House of
Prayer, for a whole Hour together, and
yet not be praying one single Minute of
that time. Nay, he may be all the while
reading or repeating over a Form of Words,
drawn up in the Form of a Prayer or Pe-
tition to God, and yet not be praying at
all: for he is no longer praying, than
while his Heart goes along with his
Tongue, and while he inwardly desires
those things which he outwardly asks for.
And on the other side, thq' a Man utters
no Words at all, nor uses any Sign or Po-
sture of Devotion, and whatever Place he

is in, in a Field, in his Shop, or in his Closet, if he inwardly desires any thing of God, this is praying. An *Ejaculation* of the Mind alone is a Prayer, but no Words or Expressions, without a Desire of the Mind accompanying them, are so.

And this is a Point which should be well considered by us, to prevent, so far as is possible, all wandring Thoughts in Prayer, and that we may not rest in, nor satisfy our selves only with the outward Shew of Devotion. For there are very few so void of all Religion, as not to be perswaded that Prayer is a necessary Duty; but then there are a great many, who call that Praying, which is not so; nay, and who perswade themselves that they have fully discharged their Duty in this Point, whereas in truth they have not performed it at all: for they have, it may be, been at the Church, or upon their Knees, and there they heard the Minister read or say over the Words of a very good Prayer; or perhaps they themselves, at home, or in their Closets, and in the same praying Posture, have read or repeated o-

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ver the same with their own Mouths; and one or the other of these they have done, it may be, very regularly and constantly, two or three times every Day, and therefore they think they cannot be blamed as deficient in their Duty. But, for all this, they may have been very deficient in it; nay, they may have done all this very regularly and constantly, and yet not have performed the Duty at all: for if while with their Mouths they repeated over the Words of a Prayer, their Minds were taken up with other Thoughts; or if while they were present at the publick Prayers, they only heard them, as they would have done a Chapter or a Sermon, just attending to the Sense of them, or observing the Expressions thereof; if when they repeated the Words of a Prayer, their Heart did not go along with their Tongue; or if, when they were present at the publick Prayers, they did not join therewith in their Minds, and say an inward *Amen* thereto; they may be said to have been reading, or speaking, or hearing, but they can't be said to have been praying: because

cause the very Form and Essence of Prayer, is an *inward Desire* of the things prayed for, and that was wholly wanting.

(2.) The next thing declared in the Definition of Prayer, which I have before given, is the Subject Matter of Prayer. Prayer, I said, is the Desire of the Soul, for the obtaining of *some good thing which we want*. The general Subject of Prayer is some good thing; *i. e.* what either is really good for us, or what we apprehend to be so; for we cannot desire any thing but under the Notion of Good. But then, in order to our desiring it, it is also requisite that we want it; that is, that it be some good thing which we have not already, and also that we are sensible of the Need we have of it. For what we have already we cannot desire, (unless it be only the Continuance of it;) and unless we are persuaded that we have Need of it, *i. e.* that it would contribute much to our Welfare and Happiness to have it, we cannot earnestly desire it: for be the thing in it self never so good, yet unless
we

we conceive it would do us good we shall be indifferent whether we have it or no. Whatever therefore we conceive would conduce to the Welfare either of our Souls or Bodies, either in this Life or in the next, is the proper Matter or Subject of Prayer.

(3.) The next thing to be taken notice of in the Definition of Prayer before given, is the Object of Prayer, or the Person to whom our Desire of any good thing which we want, must be directed or signified; and that is God. Prayer, I told you, is the Desire of the Soul, for the obtaining of some good thing which we want, *directed or signified to God*. For when we ask or beg of a Man, or any other created Being, such Help or Assistance as he is able to give us, or any good thing which we think it is in his Power to bestow upon us, this may indeed be call'd Prayer, but it is not what we mean by religious Prayer, which is the only Subject I am now speaking of. For a religious Prayer must be directed to God,
and

and to God only ; and if we put up a Prayer to any other Being, for the bestowing upon us any good thing, which is only in the Power of God to bestow, we make that Being a God, and so become guilty of Idolatry. But then,

(4.) And lastly ; in order to the exciting in us such a Desire of any good thing as is properly meant by Prayer, it is requisite, not only that we be sensible of our own Want of what we desire, but likewise that we be persuaded, that he of whom we desire it, is *able* to bestow it upon us ; else our Desire of it is not properly a Prayer, but rather only a random Wish. And therefore I added, in the Definition of Prayer before given, that this Desire of the good things we want must be directed to God, *as able to bestow the same upon us.* For unless we think him able to supply our Wants, we shall have no Encouragement to direct or signify our Desires to him, but may as well keep them within our own Breasts.

And

And thus much may serve for the first thing, which was to explain the Nature of Prayer in general, or to shew what Prayer is. I proceed now, in the second Place,

2. To shew the Obligation which lies upon us to practise this Duty, and thereby to persuade us to it. And here, not to mention the Benefits and Advantages of Prayer, which I shall have Occasion to speak somewhat of by and by, I shall at present observe only these two things: (1.) That to pray to God is a very reasonable Duty in it self: and, (2.) That it is expressly required and commanded by God, as the Condition of our obtaining from him such things as we stand in need of.

(1.) That to pray to God for such things as we want, is a very reasonable Duty; 'tis indeed what Reason alone would have taught us, and prompted us to, tho' it had been no where commanded; for 'tis natural to desire what we want. This is what

what needs not be prescrib'd, because 'tis what we can't avoid doing: and therefore since God, and he only, is able to supply all our Wants, what can be a more reasonable Duty than that we should direct our Desires, and put up our Petitions to him? This is what natural Reason alone has taught the most ignorant and savage People upon Earth, that seeing they need a great many things which they are not able to supply themselves withal, they ought to endeavour to get their Wants supplied by imploring the Aid and Assistance of some Being that is more mighty and powerful than themselves: and the most barbarous Nations in the World have had a Notion and Persuasion that there is some such Being; a Being infinitely superior to themselves: and on whom they have a necessary Dependence, and who is able to do for them all that they can desire. Indeed, who this Being is, some Persons, and some whole Nations too, have been ignorant of; and therefore have been greatly mistaken in the Object of their Worship, and have directed their Prayers
to

to Devils, or the Souls of deceased Men, instead of God who made Heaven and Earth, and all things therein. But in the general Notion of the Being of a God, and that he ought to be worshipped and prayed to, there has been an universal Agreement among all People and Nations of the World ; so that Prayer may well be reckon'd one of the first Duties which natural Reason teaches ; which therefore, if we neglect to practise, we shew ourselves not only destitute of Religion, but void of Reason too.

And if to this it should be objected, that seeing God himself knows what things we stand in need of, without our telling him, there is no Need that we should acquaint him with our Wants ; and that seeing he is an infinitely good and kind Being, more ready to give than we are either to ask or to receive, there is no need of our urging and solliciting him to do what his own innate Goodness will prompt him to do for us, altho' we do not ask it: the Answer is easy, *viz.*

That

That these two Attributes of God, his Knowledge and his Goodness, are so far from rendering it unreasonable to pray to him for such things as we want, that 'tis indeed chiefly the Consideration of these Attributes of God, which shew it to be a reasonable Duty to pray to him. For,

1st. As to his Knowledge. If he did not know every thing, we should want that good Encouragement which we now have to put up our Prayers to him, because then we could not be sure that he would hear our Prayers. And his knowing what we want, before we declare our Wants to him, is no Reason at all why we should not declare them. For still, tho' we do not tell him any thing which he knew not before, it is but fit and reasonable, however, that, as we are really in Want, we should own our Wants to him; that, as we are really dependent upon him, we should acknowledge our Dependence upon him. In a Word; that we are indigent and impotent; that we need many things, and what things they are
which

which we need; that we cannot supply our own Needs, and that God alone is able to supply them: all these things, God knows as well, or indeed, rather, much better than we do. But for all that, it is but fit and becoming us, that we should profess and own what we know to be true, and freely declare the Sense we have of our own Weakness, and of the Power of God. And,

2dly. As to the Goodness of God. If we did not believe him to be a good, benign, and bountiful Being, we should have no good Encouragement to entreat him to be kind to us. And, on the other side, our knowing that he is so, *i.e.* that he is ready and willing to do us good, is a very good Reason to induce us to pray him to be kind to us, because it gives us good Assurance that our Prayers will be successful.

But what Need, you'll say, is there of our praying to him, for that which he, being a kind and merciful Being, will bestow upon us without asking?

I answer; altho' we were sure that he would do for us all that we ask, without our asking; tho' indeed upon this Supposition our Prayers would not be so necessary as now they are, yet even then it would be a reasonable and necessary Duty to pray to God. For 'tis but reasonable that a Son should ask his Father for Bread when he wants it, altho' he knows his Father's Goodness and Love to him are such, that he would give it him without asking; for by his asking it, he acknowledges his Dependence upon his Father. And this is a very just and reasonable Acknowledgment on the Son's Part; it is an Acknowledgment which the Son ought to make of his own Accord, altho' his Father did not expressly require him to make it.

But then, I say, farther, that 'tis a mistaken Notion of God's Goodness, which makes us think he will give us every thing we want without our asking: 'tis true indeed, he might always do thus if he pleased; and he does daily do us a great deal of Good without asking, and by his Bounty

ty prevents our Petitions: but that he always does, or that he always will do thus, we have no Reason to conclude, only from the Consideration of the divine Goodnes: For tho' the Goodnes of God be infinite, so that we cannot set Bounds to it, it may nevertheless be truly said, that it is limited and bounded by his own Wisdom and Justice; he is as good and gracious as an infinitely just and wise Being can be, and that's infinite Goodness; but he is not good and gracious beyond what is just and wise. And therefore in many Cases, tho' our Prayers are not necessary to move him to Compassion, they may be necessary to move him to express and exercise his Compassion towards us; because if he should give us every thing which we wanted, without asking, this might not be agreeable to his Wisdom, because then Men would not be so sensible of their Dependence upon God, but they would be more apt to attribute the good things they received to Chance, or to the natural Course of things: whereas now, while good things are in great Measure

with-holden from Men, till they pray for them, and then are given them upon their Petition; by this they see who it is who does them Good; by this they are convinced how highly it concerns them to endeavour to procure his Favour and Good-will towards them. But,

2. If there were no Reason to be given of this Duty, no Reason, I mean, why God should exact and require it of us; it is a Reason abundantly sufficient to oblige us to the careful and constant Practice of it, that it is expressly required and commanded by God, to whom we owe an absolute and entire Obedience in whatsoever he commands; and that our Performance thereof is made by the divine Will, the Condition upon which only we can be assured of having our Wants supplied by God. *Ask, and it shall be given you.*

And, I suppose, I shall not need to cite any Texts of Scripture for the Proof of this, because I cannot suppose any Person here present so unacquainted with Scripture, as not in the reading or hearing it

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to have met with several Places most strictly enjoining this Duty. And that our Neglect to practise this Duty as we ought, is the only Reason that we have not every thing which we want, and can reasonably desire; every thing which is really good for us, we are plainly told by St. James, Ch. iv. v. 2. *Ye have not, because ye ask not.*

Supposing therefore that enough hath been already said to explain the Nature of Prayer, and to shew our general Obligation to the Practice of it, both from Reason and Scripture, I proceed to the next thing proposed, which was,

3. To mention the several Sorts and Kinds of Prayer, and to subjoin the particular Reasons obliging to each of them.

And here, considering the *Matter* of Prayer, I might distinguish it, into Prayer for *spiritual*, and Prayer for *temporal* good things; or into Prayer for *ourselves*, or Intercession for *others*.

Or considering the *Manner* of Prayer, I might distinguish it into *mental* or *vocal* Prayer; mental Prayer being when we only pray in our Hearts, without uttering or expressing any Words; and vocal Prayer, when we express in Words, and utter with our Mouth the Desires of our Hearts.

But the only Distinction which I shall at present insist upon, shall be that of *publick*, and *secret Prayer*: publick Prayer being when we join with others in putting up our common Petitions to God; and secret Prayer, when being retired from all Company, we put up our private Petitions to him. And these, tho' for Substance and Matter they are the same, and differ only in the Circumstance of Place, or Company, are yet really two distinct Duties, and both of them so necessary upon several Accounts, to be performed in their proper Season and Opportunity, that the doing of the one will not wholly excuse the doing of the other.

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'Tis true indeed, that the more Opportunities we have for publick Prayer, the less Time we shall be obliged to spend in our private Devotions; but yet some time must nevertheless be spent in private Prayer, or else how much Time soever we spend in our publick Devotion, we shall be deficient in a necessary Duty. For tho', whenever we put up any Prayer to God, whether in publick or in secret, we perform the Duty of Prayer, and discharge the Condition upon which God has promised his Blessing; yet there are some Ends which may be served by publick Prayer, which cannot be served by private; and some again that may be served by private Prayer, which cannot be served by publick: there are, consequently, particular and peculiar Reasons obliging to each of them. And therefore, tho' the general End of Prayer is served by either of them, whether private or publick, upon which Account, when we have not Opportunity for the one, the other may for the most part serve instead of it; yet since all the Ends of Prayer are not, nor

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can be, served by either of them alone, we are obliged to practise both, each of them at all convenient and proper Seasons.

For,

(1.) By publick Prayer, when we join with others in putting up our common Petitions to God, we do most Honour to God and Religion: by this also we shew a good Example to the World, and help to kindle Devotion in others: and lastly; these Prayers are the most certain of good Success, being encouraged by a special Promise of our *Saviour*, Matth. xviii. 20. *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.*

This therefore is a Duty by it self, which our private Devotions will not serve instead of, or suffice to excuse us from. For as we are obliged to acknowledge to God himself our Dependence upon him, so we are obliged also to own the same to the World; as we are bound to put up Prayers to God for our selves, so we are also bound to intercede with him for others;

thers; as it is our Duty to glorify God in our Heart, so it is likewise our Duty to glorify him with our Mouth; and as we ought to edify our selves, so we ought also (as we are able,) to endeavour to edify others. And all these Ends of Prayer are best served by publick Prayer; and the more publick our publick Prayers are, the better do they serve and promote the Ends of publick Prayer. And therefore the most publick Prayers of all being those in the Church, when the whole Parish or Neighbourhood, by publick Appointment meet together to worship God, these Opportunities ought by no Means to be neglected by us; especially not on the Lord's Day, the Day of the solemn Assemblies, the Day dedicated and set apart on purpose for this Use. For if when (having no just Objection to the Prayers which are used in publick,) we are not hindred (as sometimes perhaps we may be,) by a very reasonable Excuse, we omit to join with our Brethren in the publick Worship of God; whatever Pretences we may make of Piety and Religion, our Omission of

this

this most necessary Duty is a certain Argument that we are clearly destitute of it; and that, whatever we pretend, we have no real Regard either to the Honour of God, or the Edification of his Church. 'Tis possible indeed, that a Man who makes a great Shew of Religion in publick, and who duly frequents the Church, may yet have no true Sense of Religion in his Mind; but 'tis not possible that a Man, who is truly religious, should not make a Shew and Profession of it; because the outward Shew and Profession of Religion is it self a Part, and a necessary Duty of Religion. So that tho' there may be a Shew of Piety, where there is no real Piety, there can be no true Piety where there is not a Shew of it; and the greater the Shew, provided there be true Piety at the bottom, the greater the Piety.

I say therefore again, as I said before, the more publick our publick Prayers are, the better; and if they could always be offered up in the Church, and in the Assembly of the Faithful, on the Week-days,

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as well as on *Sundays*, it would be best of all; but since all have not Opportunity for this, the next most publick sort of Prayer is in the Family: this therefore, where there is not Opportunity for the other, should be practis'd in the room of it; and if we cannot meet together in as great Numbers as we ought, to worship God, we ought however to meet in as great Numbers as we can. And to this kind of publick Worship are annexed the same Advantages, and the same Promises, as to the other, only in a less Degree; for hereby also we publickly glorify God, we own and profess to the World our Dependence upon him, we give a good Example, we quicken the Devotion of others, and we shall also receive a gracious Answer to these Petitions, according to the Promise of our *Saviour* before-cited, that *where any (tho' they be but two or three) are gathered together in his Name, he will be there in the midst of them.* But,

(2.) As

(2.) As publick Prayer is a Duty by it self, so is private Prayer also a Duty by it self, which our publick Prayers, tho' we have never so frequent Opportunities for them, will not excuse us from; but which, however, we ought to be more regular and constant in the Practice of, when the Opportunities of publick Devotion are but few, and return but seldom.

For we are guilty of a great many Sins which are not so proper to be made the Matter of a publick Confession, because that must be made in general Words, such as every one in the Congregation may join in; these Sins therefore we ought to mourn for, and to confess to God in private, in our Closet, or some secret Retirement.

Some Petitions also there are more peculiar to every Man's own self, which therefore he ought to put up to God when he is by himself, because they are not so proper to be put up in Company.

Nay,

Nay, and even the most common Petitions, such as we may, and when we have Opportunity we ought to put up in Company with others, joining with us in the same Petitions; I say, even these Petitions we ought also at other times to put up by our selves in private; to testify thereby our Belief God's Omnipotence, and to assure our selves thereby of our own Sincerity; according to that express Command of our *Saviour*, in *Matth. vi. 5, 6.* *When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the Hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the Synagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets, that they may be seen of Men.* This was the Case of the *Pharisees*; they were a People much given to Prayer, and, as our *Saviour* observes in another Place, they us'd to make very long Prayers too, but they prayed only in publick, *in the Synagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets*, where they might be seen by others; and thus they chose to pray,

pray, because that was their chief Design in praying, that they might be taken for very devout and religious Persons; so that with the fairest Shew of Religion, they were, in truth, the vilest of Hypocrites.

And this may be any Man's Case, who seldom or never prays but in Company; he may deceive others, nay, and he may deceive himself too, with a Shew and Appearance of Piety, and yet be all the while but an Hypocrite: or tho' he be sincere, yet he cannot be sure of his own Sincerity; he cannot be sure that the Desire of Praise from Men is not the prevailing ingredient in his Devotions.

But a Man may be more certain of his Sincerity, when he makes a Conscience of praying to God in secret, when no Eye sees but God's, and when no Person in the World knows what he's a doing but God only. For true Religion must needs be, I do not say, the prevailing, but the only Motive to
secret

secret Devotion, because there is no other End to be served by it. And as the Ends of publick Prayer are best served, the more publick the Prayer is; so the Ends of private Prayer are most promoted by the greatest Privacy and Secrecy in the Performance of the Duty: and therefore 'tis our Saviour's Direction, in the Words immediately following those afore-cited; *but thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut the Door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

In a Word: publick Prayer is, in several Respects, better than private; and private Prayer is likewise, in several Respects, better than publick; i. e. they are both best in their proper Season; they are consequently, though in Matter the same, yet really too distinct Duties, and will be each of them rewarded by God: i. e. I mean,

mean, if our Prayers are so qualified as they ought to be; and how that is, we are taught in the Text; where, after the general Exhortation to Prayer, *Ask, and it shall be given you;* 'tis added, *seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

In which Words (as I have already observed,) there are two Qualifications of prevailing Prayer clearly intimated: 1. That it be earnest and urgent; *seek, and ye shall find;* for to *seek* a thing, implies greater Earnestness and Desire to have it, than is implied just in asking for it: and, 2. That it be constant and importunate; *knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* For when a Man knocks at the Door of an House, he does not use to give one knock only, and so go his way, but he continues knocking, till the Door be opened.

But to speak of these two Qualifications, or Conditions of prevailing Prayer, which was the second, and of the Success and Efficacy of urgent and importunate

tunate Prayer, which was the third general Head propounded to be spoken to , will be Matter enough for another Discourse, and so I shall defer it to a farther Opportunity.



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OF THE
QUALIFICATIONS
OF
PRAYER.

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DISCOURSE LXXV.

Of the Qualifications of Prayer.

MATTH. vii. 7, 8.

Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

OUR Saviour's Design, in these Words, was to instruct his Hearers in the Nature, and to persuade them to the due and constant Exercise of

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the great Duty of Prayer; in Pursuance of which same Design I have therefore proposed, in discoursing upon them, to do these three things.

I. To speak somewhat in general concerning the Duty of Prayer, and our Obligation to practise it. *Ask, and it shall be given you.*

II. To speak more particularly concerning those two Conditions or Qualifications of prevailing Prayer which are intimated in the Text, viz. 1. That it be earnest and urgent: and, 2. That it be constant and importunate. *Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* And,

III. To discourse somewhat concerning the Success and Efficacy of urgent and importunate Prayer. *Every one that asketh, &c.*

I. I proposed to speak somewhat in general concerning the Nature of Prayer, and

and our Obligation to practise it; *Ask, and it shall be given you.* And I have already, in a former Discourse on the Words, said as much as I thought was needful on this Head; having shewn what Prayer is, our Obligation to pray, and the Necessity of doing it, both in publick with others, and in private by our selves.

II. The second thing proposed was to speak somewhat more particularly concerning those two Conditions or Qualifications of prevailing Prayer, which are intimated in the Text; viz. 1. That it be earnest and urgent: and, 2. That it be constant and importunate; the former is implied in the Word *seek*; *seek, and ye shall find.* For to seek a thing implies greater Earnestness and Desire to have it, than is implied just in asking for it. And the latter is implied in the Word *knock*; *knock, and it shall be opened unto you:* that Word, I say, implies a frequent Repetition of, a constant Continuance in the Duty. For when a Man knocks at the Door of an House, he does not use to

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give one knock only, and so go his way, in Case the People who are within do not answer presently ; but so long as he knows they are within , he continues knocking, until the Door be opened to him.

i. Then, I am to shew what Fervency or Earnestness in Prayer is requisite to make it availing ; *seek, and ye shall find.* Now to seek for a thing, is, (as I observed before,) more than barely to ask for it : to seek , implies an earnest Desire to have the thing which we seek for.

And in general, that Fervency or Earnestness which is requisite to make our Petitions to God for any Mercy , avail- ing, is an inward hearty Desire accompa- nying our outward Expressions ; the saying an inward hearty *Amen*, to every Petition which we put up to God with our Lips : we are then fervent in Prayer, when our Lips and our Heart move to- gether in the same Petition. So St. James, speaking of the Prophet *Elijah*, Jam. v. 17. says of him, *προσεύχετο*, *he prayed in his Prayer*; we translate it, *he*

he prayed earnestly. His Desires were lively, vehement, and passionate, for the obtaining of that which he prayed for ; and so must ours be, whenever we put up any Petition to God for any thing, or else our Prayers will not avail us any thing ; we must not only ask for what we want, but we must diligently and earnestly *seek* it, if ever we hope to find it ; *seek, and ye shall find.*

For even our blessed *Saviour* himself, the well beloved Son of the Father, was heard by him upon no other Terms ; even his Prayer, if it had not been fervent, would not have been availing ; and therefore the *Author* to the *Hebrews* observes, *Heb. v. 7.* that when *in the Days of his Flesh he offered up Prayers and Supplications unto him that was able to save him from Death* ; he did it *with strong Crying and Tears.* And to the Warmth and Fervency of his Prayer is attributed the good Success of it, in the Words immediately following, *he was heard, in that he feared.*

And

And such must our Prayers to God be, if we hope for Success from them; they must be offered up with strong Crying, *i.e.* not with a loud Voice, but with an earnest Desire; not with passionate Expressions, but with a fervent Devotion; with a Mind fixed and attent to the Business we are about, and in an humble Sense of our own Wants and Weakness, and with a firm Belief of God's Power and Goodness.

Such Fervency in Prayer as this, is what our *Saviour* in the Text means by *seeking*; *seek, and ye shall find*. And this is the first necessary Condition or Qualification of a prevailing Prayer, it must be earnest or fervent.

2. The other necessary Condition or Qualification of a prevailing Prayer, intimated by our *Saviour* in the Text, is, that it be constant and importunate; *knock*, says our *Saviour*, *and it shall be opened unto you*.

And there are several other Phrases, by which this is expressed and enjoined in the holy Scripture, which it may not be amiss

mifs to consider ; because tho' they have all the same Sense and Meaning with this in the Text, *knock, and it shall be opened unto you* ; yet, by comparing them all together, we shall best be instructed what our Duty is in this Matter, or what Constancy or Importunity in Prayer is requisite for the obtaining of our Petitions. There are, I say, several other Phrases by which this is expressed and enjoined in the holy Scripture ; *Watch and pray always*, says our Saviour, Luke xxi. 36. And, *to this Purpose he spake a Parable*, says St. Luke, *that Men ought always to pray, and not to faint*, Luke xviii. 1. And *continue in Prayer, and watch in the same*, says St. Paul, Coll. iv. 2. And again ; *continue instant in Prayer*, Rom. xii. 12. And again ; *pray always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all Perseverance*, Eph. vi. 18. And, *pray without ceasing*, 1 Thess. v. 17. And, *I will that Men pray every where*, says the same Apostle, 1 Tim. ii. 8. And of her who is a Widow indeed, the same Apostle says,

says, *1 Tim.* v. 5. that *she continues in Supplications and Prayers, Night and Day.* *Give him no Rest,* says the Prophet *Isaiah,* Ch. Ixii. 7. And the holy *Psalmist,* describing the Practice of himself, and other devout Persons in his Time, thus expresses it, *Psal.* cxxiii. 2. *Behold, as the Eyes of Servants look unto the Hand of their Masters, and as the Eyes of a Maiden unto the Hand of her Mistress, so our Eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have Mercy upon us.*

By these, and such like Phrases, Constancy and Importunity in Prayer is expressed and enjoined in the holy Scripture. The Meaning of which was very much misunderstood by some Hereticks in the ancient Church, who thought themselves obliged thereby to spend their whole time in praying, to the Neglect of all other Duties, and even of such Care and Labour as was necessary for the Support of Life.

But these did not err so much on the one Hand, as the Generality of Men do now err on the other Hand, who notwithstanding these Precepts enjoining such Attendance

tendance to, and Assiduity in this Duty, do nevertheless pass away whole Days, a great many, perhaps, whole Weeks, without so much as once seriously recommending themselves to God's Care, and craving his Blessing. For,

(1.) The least which can possibly be meant by a Precept, enjoining us to do a thing *always* or *continually*, is that we should do it *very often*, that we should not suffer any great Space of Time to pass in the Intermission of it. And therefore they who never, or very seldom, never perhaps but when they are under some sore Affliction, or in some great Danger, do think upon God, and set themselves to seek his Favour, as they are manifestly guilty of the Breach of those Precepts which command a Constancy and Continuedness in Prayer; so they have no Reason to expect that those Prayers which they do put up in their Affliction or Distress should avail them much; because they do not then think upon God by Choice, but by Constraint, and because
they

they can't help it: they seek his Aid then only because they have nothing else to trust to, or depend upon. And there is little Reason to expect that God should think upon them in the Time of their Adversity and Distress, who lived in a constant Forgetfulness of God, all the time of their Wealth and Prosperity. *Because I have called (says God,) and ye refused, I have stretched out my Hands, and no Man regarded.* — *I also will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh. When your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind, when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me,* Prov. i. 24, &c.

(2.) To pray *always*, or to pray *continually*, implies at least that we should make Prayer a *part* of our *Task* and *Business*; that we should set about it not only at leisure times, and when we have nothing else to employ our selves about, but
that

that we should allot and set apart some times on purpose for it; even tho' it be to the Neglect of other Business: this being indeed as necessary a Business in its Season, as any other Work which we can at any time employ our selves about; a Business so very necessary, that while we neglect it we cannot reasonably hope for good Success in any other Enterprize which we take in Hand. For we cannot be said to do a thing always and continually, if we never set about it, but only when we have nothing else to employ our selves in; if we do it only, as it were, by Chance, and by the by; and, in Case such a leisure time had not happened, should not have done it at all.

(3.) The Precepts commanding us to pray *continually*, and *without ceasing*, do farther enjoin, that, at least, we should not *neglect* those *Times* and *Seasons* of discharging this Duty which are set *apart* for this purpose, either by divine Appointment, or by publick Authority: such in particular are the *Lord's Day*, and the other

ther *Feasts* and *Fasts* of the Church. To omit praying at other times besides these, is indeed a culpable Omission, and an Argument of great Coldness and Indifference in the Worship of God; but to omit it at these sett and stated times, argues a Contempt of the Duty, and a perfect Want of Religion. When we do not of our own Accord put our selves upon the Duty, and seek Occasions for it, 'tis an Argument of great Carelessness of our own Good, and of Want of Love to God. But when we refuse to pray, altho' we are called upon and invited to it by the Company of the Faithful, who say to us, *Come now, and let us go up into the House of God;* when, I say, we refuse to accept of this Invitation, and purposely set our selves to do our own Works, at those times which are hallowed and set apart for God's Worship, we do in Effect, and by fair Interpretation, deny that there is a God, and disown that there is any Being above us to whom we owe any Worship or Homage. Nay, farther,

(4.) These

(4.) These solemn and stated Times of publick Worship coming but seldom, we cannot in any reasonable Sense be said to pray *continually*, and *without ceasing*, unless we also embrace all other fit Occasions of discharging this necessary Piece of Service. And what are fit Occasions, I shall not need to tell you; for as to Times and Seasons, all are alike to God; our God never is, (as *Elijah* said mockingly to the *Priests* and *Worshippers* of *Baal* concerning their God; our God, I say, never is) *either talking, or pursuing, or in a Journey, or asleep*; so that his Worshippers may sometimes happen to spend their Breath to no purpose when they call upon him; but *his Ears are always open* to the devout Prayers of his humble Supplicants. And therefore whenever we are sensible of our Need of any thing, that is a proper time to put up a Petition to God for it. And our Wants are so many, and our Needs do so often return upon us, that if we did but pray as often as we have Need to pray, we

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should fulfil the Apostle's Precept in the literal and strictest Sense, we should indeed *pray without ceasing*, and without Interruption; we should be so often at our Prayers, that we should scarcely find time enough to spend in any other Matters; we should, to be sure, have none to spare, to pass away in Idleness, or to spend in the Works of Sin and the Devil.

(5.) Our Wants being so many, and so continual, and returning upon us every Day, we ought at least *every Day* to put up our Petition to God for the Supply of them; and the Interruption of Prayer, but for one Day only, is a manifest Breach of those apostolical Precepts whereby we are enjoined to *pray always*, and to *pray without ceasing*. And that to pray to God at least every Day is our most necessary and indispensable Duty, is farther clearly intimated in that Pattern or Form of Prayer which our *Saviour* himself hath taught us; one Petition whereof is, *Give us this Day our daily Bread*; which Expression plainly supposes, that we are to
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put up this Petition (and consequently all other necessary Petitions) to God every Day. For we need our daily Bread, *i. e.* all the Necessaries of Life, every Day we live; and God has not promised to supply us with them, unless we pray for them. And therefore being, in this Prayer of our Lord's own making, taught to pray only for the Necessaries of this present Day, this clearly implies that it is our indispensable Duty to repeat this Petition, and to renew this Request to God every Day; and if this, then other Requests too; for this is but one of a great many Petitions, which we are taught in that same Prayer. But then, farther,

(6.) There being a remarkable Division of every Day into two parts, *viz.* the *Day* and the *Night*, the former design'd for Business, and the latter for Rest; and each of these Seasons having its peculiar Wants; for the proper Wants of the *Day* are, an Ability to go about and discharge the Work which God hath set us, and his Blessing upon our Endeavours, and his

B b 2 Grace

Grace to keep us from Temptations, or to enable us to overcome them: and the proper and more peculiar Wants of the Night, are, the Care and Protection of the divine Providence, to guard and defend us from all Evils and Dangers; which, tho' indeed we do always stand in need of, and cannot live without one Moment; for 'tis *in God* (as the *Apostle* says,) that *we live, and move, and have our Being*; yet we then seem to want more especially, when our own Powers and Faculties are all bound up by Sleep, and we are not able to take any Care at all of our selves. Each of these Seasons therefore, I say, the Day and the Night, having its peculiar Wants, it is highly reasonable that we should severally address our selves to God for the Supply of them; that is, that every Morning when we rise we should implore his Grace, to assist and strengthen us in our Works, and his Blessing to prosper our Labours: and that every Night, before we go to Bed, we should solemnly commit our selves to his Protection.

And

And thus those Precepts of praying without ceasing, and praying continually, are expounded by some, *viz.* as extending no farther than in Proportion to the daily Sacrifices among the Jews, which were constantly offered every Morning and Evening; but they are by none conceived interpretable to any lower Proportion. So that we cannot in Reason be said to *pray continually*, unless our Prayers be offered as continually as the daily Sacrifice was; *i. e.* at least every Morning and Evening: I say, at least every Morning and Evening. For indeed,

(7.) And lastly; the Phrases used in Scripture, to enjoin a Constancy in this Duty, seem to imply much more; they seem to imply that there ought to be no Intermission of it, that we ought to be always praying. And seeing in this Sense the Precepts are practicable, I see no Reason why we should not think our selves obliged to practise accordingly. I do not mean that we ought to be, or that we can be, always actually upon our Knees,

B b 3 and

and offering up solemn Prayers to God; for this can be done only at some Seasons: but we may and ought to be always in a *praying Temper*; we may and ought to live in a constant and continual Sense of our Dependence upon God for all that we have or want, and to acknowledge the same, when we cannot do it in a set Prayer, at least in short Ejaculations, and Petitions of our Heart to God. And thus we may (even in a literal Sense) *pray continually*, and *without ceasing*; there being no Business of our Life which we set our selves to, or employ our selves in, to which it will be any Hindrance to cast up now and then an Eye to Heaven, and to send up a short Wish or Petition to the Throne of Grace. Thus, I say, we may, and thus we ought to be ever praying, tho' we cannot be always (what we call) at Prayers: and thus praying always, and praying continually, will be so far from being an Hindrance to our other Works and Business, that it will rather greatly promote the same, and yield us much Comfort therein.

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The Sum of what has been said on this Head, is this; it was not the Design of our *Saviour* in the Text, where he bids us *knock* that it may be opened to us; nor is it the Meaning of those other Places of Scripture which enjoin continual Prayer, and command us to *pray without ceasing*, that we should spend our whole time in Prayer, and do nothing else, for that is impossible; and besides, it is inconsistent with our Obligation to other Duties. But thus much, most certainly, they do enjoin, that we should not be so taken up with other Employments as to leave no Room for this; but on the contrary, that we should be at Leisure for this, as much and as often as we can; and that whether we have Leisure or not, and even tho' it be to the Neglect of other Busines, we should set apart some considerable Portion of our Time every Day for this Purpose. For certainly, when we are bid to *pray always*, and to *pray without ceasing*, the Meaning cannot be less than this, that we should pray often.

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But

But if it be asked, how often at the least it is our necessary Duty to address our selves to God in a solemn and set Prayer, so that if we fail of doing it (how urgent soever our other Businels and Occasions are,) we commit a Sin; I know no Text of Scripture which hath determined that Point precisely.

But besides what hath been already said for the Resolution of Conscience in this Matter, we have in Scripture the Examples of good and holy Men set before us, which may give us some farther Direction therein. For of *Daniel* it is noted, *Dan.* vi. 10. that he *knealed on his Knees three times a Day, and prayed and gave Thanks before his God.* And this Practice he would not intermit, even when he ran the Hazard of his Life by it. And the holy *Psalmist* says of himself, *Psal.* lv. 18. *At Evening, and Morning, and at Noon-Day, will I pray, and cry atoud.*

These Examples, therefore, if we follow, we need not question but we shall fully observe those Precepts which require us to pray incessantly, according to the true

true Intent and Meaning of them. But on the contrary, if we fall much short of these Examples, as we cannot in any good Sense be said to pray incessantly; (for no Man can reasonably be said to do a thing constantly, or always, which he doth not at least do, frequently, at convenient times, at times not much distant from one another;) so it is a Sign that our Piety and Devotion is much more cold than was that of these holy Men in primitive times, and therefore 'tis no wonder if we do not receive such large Returns from the divine Bounty.

Thus then we are to be constant in our Prayers; *i. e.* very frequent in the Practice of the Duty of Prayer in general, *knock*, that it may *be opened unto you*. But the Constancy or Importunity in Prayer, required in Scripture, and particularly by the Phrase here used in the Text, *knock and it shall be opened*, import still somewhat more than this, *viz.* that we should be frequent in putting up the same Petitions, and making the same Requests; that we should ask of God the same things
over

over and over again, and not leave off asking till our Request be granted: that is to say, if we are satisfyed that the thing we ask for is agreeable to God's Will to grant; if it be such a thing as he has promised he will give if we ask him for it. Thus it is said in the Place before cited, *Luke xviii. 1.* that our Saviour *spake a Parable to this purpose, that Men ought always to pray, and not to faint;* i. e. not to be discouraged, not to give over asking if their Suit be not presently granted, but to press the same Request over and over again; and (as the *Prophet* expresses it,) *give God no Rest* until we obtain his Blessing. And this also, as I said, is clearly intimated in the Phrase used by our *Saviour* in the Text; *knock, and it shall be opened unto you;* viz. that we should not give over knocking till the Door be opened.

And so much may serve to have been spoken on the second Head, which was to explain the two Conditions or Qualifications of a prevailing Prayer, which are intimated in the Text, viz. 1. That it be earnest

earnest and urgent, *seek, and ye shall find:* and, 2. That it be constant and importunate; *knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

III. I proceed now to the third thing propos'd, which was, to discourse somewhat concerning the Fruit and Efficacy of Prayer, when it is so condition'd or qualifyed as it ought to be; or the Prevalency thereof for the obtaining of such things as we want and pray for. *Ask, says our Saviour, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

And what better Fruit can we desire, what greater Efficacy of Prayer can we expect or hope for, than the having our Requests granted? *Ask, and ye shall receive;* and, *every one that asketh, receiveth.* Can more be said or done to encourage Prayer, than this? Certainly, if Observation and Experience did but confirm

firm the Truth of these Promises ; if we found it was always thus, that *every one that asketh, receiveth*; i.e. that by Prayer to God we could always obtain all that we wanted or desired ; we should not be so backward to the Practice of this Duty as we generally are ; and being as constant in it as we ought, we should not have such Cause to complain of our Wants and Miseries as we think we have.

What shall we say then ? Are not the Promises of God true ? Is not God always as good as his Word ? Yes, doubtless he is. But if he be, how then, you'll say, does it come to pass, that we do not always receive the things which we pray for ? I answer,

i. Many times the Cause of the Unsuccessfulness of our Prayers is in our selves, either because we are not fitly qualified to partake of the divine Blessing ; for God, in dispensing his Favours, observes the Rule which our *Saviour* himself has given to Men, in the Verse before the Text ; he gives not his *holy things to Dogs*, he casts not

not his *Pearls before Swine*; he bestows not his choicest Favours upon such as understand not their Worth nor their Use: or else the Reason may be, because there is some Fault in our Prayers, and they are not such as they should be; (of which I have already spoken somewhat in this Discourse;) and this Account St. James gives of the Matter, in Jam. iv. 3. *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.* But,

2. In Case there be no Fault in our Prayers, and if we our selves are fitly qualified to receive the divine Blessing; then, I say, that the Promise of our *Saviour, ask, and ye shall receive*, is always made good to us, altho' we do not always receive just those very things which we ask of God.

For 'tis to be considered, that many times even a good Man may be mistaken in the Matter of his Petition; he may think that those things which he asks of God would be good for him, whereas indeed he had better be without them. And when the Case is thus, God hears and answers

answers our Prayers in the best manner, when he refuses to give us those things which we ask ; especially if instead thereof he gives us that which is better ; something which is really more for our Good than those things which we had asked for. For thus a kind Father, when his Son asks Bread, never refuses it, because he knows it is necessary for him ; but if he asks for a thing only because it is sweet to the Taste, but which the Father knows would poison him, or do him Hurt ; the kindest thing which a good Father can do in this Case, is to deny his Request, and to refuse to give him the thing which he asks for , tho' he begs never so hard and earnestly for it.

Now this is oftentimes our Case, especially when we pray for temporal good things. We are often mistaken in the Matter of our own Petitions, and it may truly be said of us , as our *Saviour* says of the *two Disciples*, who had requested of him *that one of them might sit on his right Hand, and the other on his left Hand, in his Kingdom* ; *Ye know not what*

what ye ask, Matth. xx. 22. And therefore, in our Prayers for temporal Blessings, our Petitions should always be very humble and modest, and conditional; we may indeed with Modesty express our own Desire, but then at the same time we should refer it wholly to God's Will and Wisdom, whether he will grant us that very thing which we ask for or not; according to that Pattern of our Saviour, Matth. xxvi.

39. *O my Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* And thus much we may depend upon from our Saviour's Promise, even in this Case, i. e. in our Prayers for temporal Blessings, or Deprecation of temporal Evils, (we may depend upon it, I say;) that if we are such as God has promised to hear, and if our Prayers are so conditioned as they should be, even these Prayers will be heard and answered; that *if we ask, we shall receive;* if not that very thing which we asked for, yet that which is really best for us to have. For we may be mistaken in what we ask, but God cannot be mi-
staken

staken in what he gives; and therefore, what he gives in Return to the devout Prayers of good Men, if it be not the same thing which they desired, we may be sure is better for them than that which they desired; and that was the best Answser to their Prayers which they could receive.

For indeed, whatever it is which we pray for in particular, the Sum of our Desire, to be sure, is, that we may be happy; that it may be well with us: this is what we mean, whatever it is that we say; and we beg this or that thing in particular, only because the obtaining thereof would, in our Opinion, conduce very much to the making us happy. And therefore if we are mistaken in our Opinion, *i. e.* if it be really best for us not to have what we ask, it is an Act of Kindness in God not to give it us, tho' we ask for it; and it is no Breach of the Promise made in the Text, *ask, and ye shall receive;* for we do really receive what we ask, *i. e.* what we meant to ask, tho' thro' Ignorance we were mistaken in the Expression of our Desire, when we receive what

what is really best for us ; for then we receive the End of our Desire, only we receive it not just in the same way which we desired it : but the Reason of that was, because (as I said,) we were mistaken in the Means of our Happiness, and what we thought would have conduced to our Happiness, would not really have conduced so much to it, as that which God was pleased to give us instead of the thing which we asked for.

Thus when our Lord, in his Agony in the Garden, prayed that *if it was possible the Cup might pass from him, i.e.* that he might be delivered from that bitter and cruel Death which he had then a near Prospect of, the *Author to the Hebrews* observes that his Prayer was answered, *Heb. v. 7. When in the Days of his Flesh, he offered up Prayers and Supplications, with strong Crying and Tears, unto him that was able to save him from Death, he was heard in that he feared.* But how was he heard ? How were his Prayers answered ? Did the *Cup pass away* as he desired ? Was he saved from the Death

which he was afraid of? No: but he was heard in the best manner, when that bitter Death, which it was necessary he should undergo for the Redemption of Mankind, (whose Peace with God he had undertaken to procure by suffering in their stead; when, I say, that bitter Death which he in his humane Nature underwent, for the Divinity could not suffer;) was made a Means of the Exaltation of that humane Nature which suffered, to the highest Degree of Honour in Heaven. His Prayer, I say, was heard and answered, tho' the Cup did not pass away, because 'twas better that the humane Nature in Christ should so suffer, than that it should not be so exalted as it afterwards was for Suffering: for, as St. Paul observes, *Phil. ii. 8, &c.* Because being found in *Fashion as a Man*, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross; therefore God also did highly exalt him, and give him a Name that is above every Name, that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things

things on Earth, and things under the Earth.

And such a Return as this we may expect to our own Prayers, for any temporal Blessing or Deliverance; I mean, if we and our Prayers are such as the Promises are made to. We may be confidently assured that our Prayers will be answered in such manner as 'tis best for us they should be answered; perhaps not by granting us that temporal good thing, or that Deliverance from temporal Evil, which we prayed for; but by so ordering Matters, that all things which happen to us, whether prosperous or adverse, whether pleasant or painful, shall in the End be as good, or better, for us than we our selves did wish. For we know (as the Apostle says, *Rom. viii. 28. i e.* we are so well assured of it, both from natural Reason, and express Revelation, that we may not improperly be said to know it;) that all things do work together for Good to them that love God.

Thus, if we *ask* we *shall receive*; i. e. if our Prayer be for temporal good things, we shall have what we ask for, or we shall have that which is better. God will be very good and gracious to us, tho' perhaps not just in that way which we desired.

But in our Petitions for spiritual Blessings, and particularly for the Grace of God, to enable us to do his Will, we go upon surer Grounds; for this we know is for our Good; this we are sure is as necessary for the Support of our spiritual Life, as Bread is for the Sustenance of our Body; and what is necessary for us we may be assured our heavenly Father will not deny us, if we are indeed his Children, and are diligent at all times to ask for it. In this Case the Promise is express, and is to be literally understood, and will be punctually fulfilled: *Ask, and ye shall receive.* For, as our Saviour argues, *Luke xi. 13.* *If ye, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your heavenly*

*venly Father give the holy Spirit to them
that ask him?*

We are sure that it is God's Will that we should *walk in the Commandments of God, and serve him*; and therefore since we cannot do this without God's special Grace, we are likewise sure that it is the Will of God to give us his Grace, if we are qualifed to receive it, and are diligent in asking for it. And therefore, when we pray for the divine Grace, we may, and ought to pray with a firm Belief that God will grant our Requests, and give us such Grace as is needful and sufficient for us; for he has promised that he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it, *1 Cor. x. 13.* And what he has promised, we may confidently ask, because we may be sure it is agreeable to his Will to grant it. For, as the *Apostle* says, *1 Job. v. 14, 15.* *This is the Confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according*

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to his Will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the Petitions that we desired of him.

To conclude all therefore; as, by what hath been said before, (in the last Discourse, and in the former part of this;) we are instructed in the Nature, and directed in the Practice of this Duty of Prayer; so by what hath been now said concerning the Fruit and Efficacy of Prayer, we are very much encouraged to the constant and diligent Performance of it. For by what hath been now said, it plainly appears, that it is not more our Duty to pray, than it is our Privilege that we have Liberty allow'd us, in all Cases, to make known our Requests to God.

We our selves should account it so; we should reckon it a very great Honour done us by an earthly King, to have free Access to his Presence at any time, and a full Liberty granted us of making

making our Petitions to him, with a good Assurance that if they were reasonable they should be obtained. Is it not then a much greater Privilege and Advantage, is it not a much higher Honour done us, that we have free Liberty given us to come into the Presence of Almighty God, the great King of the World, whose Power and Goodness are infinite? Nay, that we are not only permitted, but likewise kindly invited by him, to ask for any thing which we want; and that he has promised graciously to receive our Petition, and to grant our Request, if it be a Request fit to be granted? *Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

Having then this great Privilege allowed us, let us not lose or forfeit it by Neglect or Disuse; but let us *come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in time of Need*, as the Apostle exhorts, *Heb. iv. 16.* Let us diligent-

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ly lay hold of, and improve this blessed Advantage which God so graciously offers to us. Let us esteem Prayer (as indeed it is) our Privilege, rather than our Duty; and not go to it as to a Task and Burthen, but embrace it as a blessed Opportunity of receiving the greatest Good to our selves.

In fine: let us follow the Advice of the Apostle, *Phil. iv. 6.* and *in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, make known our Requests to God;* and then we shall not need to be anxiously *careful* for any thing our selves, but may securely depend upon him, that he will give us every thing which we want, and order all things to us for the best. For, as our *Saviour* adds, in the Words following the Text, *What Man is there of you, whom if his Son ask Bread, will he give him a Stone? Or if he ask a Fish, will he give him a Serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how*

how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him? On which Argument, or Motive to Prayer, I shall not now enlarge, because I design that for the Subject of my next Discourse.



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OF THE
SUCCESS
OF OUR
PRAYERS.

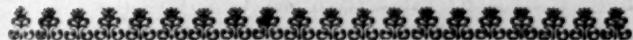
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DISCOURSE LXXVI.

Our Assurance of the Success of
our Prayers.



MATTH. vii. 9, 10, 11.

Or what Man is there of you, whom if his Son ask Bread, will he give him a Stone?

Or if he ask a Fish, will he give him a Serpent?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children,

dren, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?



UR Saviour, in the two Verses immediately foregoing, (on which I discoursed the last time;) had exhorted his Disciples to earnest and constant Prayer to God, for a Supply of such things as they should at any time have need of; and had also encouraged the diligent Practice of that Duty, with a Promise that their devout and importunate Prayers would certainly be graciously heard and answered by God. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* *For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.* On which most gracious Promise, (being made in the Name of God, by him who gave the clearest Proof that he was sent by God

to declare his Will, and to publish his Love to Mankind; and especially being given by him, who had not only received Authority from God to make the Promise, but also Power to fulfill it; for to him *all Power was given both in Heaven and Earth*. On which Promise therefore, I say,) we might safely have rely'd, and should not have needed any other Assurance of the good Success of our Prayers, to encourage us to the constant and diligent Practice of the Duty. For we can desire no better Success of our Prayers, than to have our Petitions granted; and we cannot reasonably desire a better Assurance that our Petitions will be granted, than a Promise of God for it; and no Promise to this Purpose could be more clearly and fully expressed than this is; *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth, &c.*

But such is the great Goodness of God, that in Compliance with our Weakness, to obviate all Scruples, and to remove from

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us all Doubting , he many times condescends to do such things , as one would think were beneath him to do , in order to give us the greatest Assurance possible of his Love and Kindnes , and gracious Intentions towards us .

And therefore , tho' it be *impossible for God to lie* ; and whoever knows any thing of God must know that it is so ; yet he is graciously pleased sometimes to give us such farther Assurance of the Truth of his Promises , and of the Certainty of their Performance , as we should desire , in Case we had to deal with a Man who might deceive us , and on whose bare Promise alone we could not with Confidence depend .

Thus the *Author to the Hebrews* observes , that because a Promise confirmed with an Oath , was ordinarily reckon'd a greater Assurance than a bare Promise only ; (*an Oath for Confirmation is to Men an End of all Strife* ; Heb . vi . 16 .) therefore God willing more abundantly to shew unto the Heirs of Promise the Immutability of his Counsel , confirmed it by

by an Oath ; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong Consolation who have fled for Refuge, to lay hold upon the Hope set before us,

v. 16. 17, 18.

And such another Instance of the divine Condescension, tho' not just in the same kind, we have in the Text. For,

Our Lord had promised in the foregoing Verses, that *if we ask, we shall receive; that if we seek, we shall find; and that if we knock, it shall be opened unto us.* Encouragement sufficient to engage us in all our Wants and Distresses to put up our Supplications to God with good Hope and Assurance of having our reasonable Requests granted; and yet, as if this had not been enough, he here in the Text proceeds to give us farther Assurance of the certain Accomplishment of this gracious Promise, by shewing that the Performance of it is very agreeable to the Goodness of the divine Nature; that what he has promised is no more than, considering the Power and Goodness of God,

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and the Relation wherein we stand to him, we might reasonably have expected from him, tho' he had not expressly promised it. So that our Hope of having our reasonable Petitions granted, is built upon a double Ground, *viz.* first the Truth, and then the Mercy and Goodness of God; either of which alone would have been sufficient to support such a Hope, and therefore much more are they both together abundantly sufficient to give us the fullest Assurance which can be desired, that our Prayers for such things as are needful are always heard, and will be graciously answered by God. *For, says our Saviour, what Man is there of you, who if his Son ask Bread, will give him a Stone? Or if he ask a Fish, will he give him a Serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

And indeed the Argument here used by our *Saviour* in the Text, is sufficient to give us the fullest Assurance, that all our reason-

reasonable Requests, of what kind soever, whether for this Life or for the next, shall be granted, as will appear if we consider the Force and Strength of it, which consists in a Comparison made between God and Men in sundry Respects; every Word or Circumstance of which Similitude, adds somewhat to the Strength of the Argument that is founded upon the whole. I shall consider distinctly these four things:

I. The Relation of *Paternity*, which is supposed in both Cases; in which Respect God is more truly *our Father* than Man was, and has a nearer *Relation* to all Men, and especially to all good Men, than their Fathers according to the Flesh have.

II. The greater *Knowledge* that there is in God, than is in Men, whereby he knows the *Wants* of his Children, and how to supply the same, better than any Man does.

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III. The *Power* of God, infinitely superior to the Power of any earthly Father, whereby he is *able* to give to his Children every thing which they want, which is more, many times, than earthly Fathers can do. And,

IV. And lastly; the *Goodness* of God, far beyond the Goodnes of the best Men, and the kindest Fathers upon Earth; upon which Account he may justly be presumed more ready to do good to his Children than earthly Fathers are.

These four things, I say, are either mentioned, or clearly implied in the Text, every one of which singly affords a just Ground of Hope, that whatsoever we reasonably desire of God in Prayer will be granted to us; and therefore much more do they all together give as good Assurance as can be desired, *that if we ask, we shall receive; that if we seek, we shall find; and that if we knock, it shall be opened unto us.*

I. I say,

I. I say, in this Comparison here made between God and Men, there is the same Relation of *Paternity* or *Fatherhood*, supposed in both Cases. *What Man is there of you, being a Father, who, if his Son ask Bread, will give him a Stone?* i. e. *What Father upon Earth is there, who will not give his Children, who ask him, such things as are needful for him?* *How much more then shall your Father in Heaven,* i. e. God, do the same?

There is a very near Relation between a Father and his Child, and such a natural Affection grounded upon, and resulting from thence, that a Man is hardly able to deny the reasonable Request of his Child, even when he cannot grant it without great Inconvenience to himself: and therefore, tho' he has already Bread enough for his own Use, i. e. as much Provision for Life as he himself can probably ever have Occasion for; yet if he has not enough for his Children likewise, he is contented for their Sakes, and that

he may have wherewith to supply their Wants, to toil and sweat, and take Pains, *to rise early, and sit up late, and eat the Bread of Carefulness:* to maintain their Life he willingly exposes his own to all manner of Dangers by Sea and by Land, and thinks himself well recompensed for all the Labour which he takes, and all the Hazard which he runs, if he may but thereby get Bread for his Children. And if after all, by all the Care he can take, he be able to get nothing more than is just sufficient to serve himself and them for this Day, he as freely gives them their Share of it, as he himself takes his own; he will not suffer them, if he can help it, to starve to Day, tho' it may be his own Lot to starve with them to Morrow; but having enough for to Day, he willingly communicates what he has to them, and makes them partake with him of this Day's Provision: leaving the *Morrow to take Care for the things of it self;* i.e. trusting that he shall be as able to make necessary Provision for that Day, as he was for this; or resolved, tho' he should not, yet
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not to suffer his Children to want while he has any thing to give.

Such is the natural Love and Affection of Parents to their Children. God therefore having the same Relation to us, he being *our Father*, and we *his Children*, it may reasonably be expected that, unless we forfeit his Kindness by our Undutifulness and Ingratitude, and provoke him, by our wilful Disobedience and Rebellion, to cast us off, he will bear the like kind Affection to us, and consequently will not refuse to give us whatever he knows necessary for us, if we ask it of him.

For it may be considered, and the Force of the Argument in the Text lies partly in this, that the *paternal Relation* between God and us is *nearer* than is between an earthly Father and his Son; upon which Account it may be reasonably thought, that he bears a truer and more cordial Affection to us, than our earthly Fathers do; for they are only the Fathers of our Flesh, but he is the *Father of our Spirits*. And 'tis the Spirit, or Soul of a Man, which

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is properly the Man ; 'tis the Soul only which feels Pain or Pleasure, tho' indeed by the Mediation of the bodily Senſes. If therefore an earthly Father, who has no Relation but only to the Body of his Child, (to that Body which, without the Soul enlivening it, would not discern between Good and Evil, would not be capable of either Happiness or Mifery;) does yet bear such a kind Affection to that which feels Pain or Pleasure, that is, to the Soul of his Child, only because it is nearly and intimately united to that Body of which he was the Father ; may it not much rather be thought that God (the God and *Father of the Spirits of all Flesh*) bears a truer and heartier Affection to the Soul which he himself did breathe into the Body, after it had been made capable of being actuated and enlivened by it ?

Or without considering the Distinction between Soul and Body, (the Soul, as the Man ; and the Body, as the Means and Instrument of his Sensations and Actions;) if we take the whole together, and

and consider Soul and Body as essential parts of that compound Being which we call Man ; nay, and if we should farther suppose that the Soul is *ex traduce*, from the Parents , as well as the Body , yet still the Relation between a Father and his Son will not be so near as it is between God and every Man. For the earthly Parent is only the subordinate Means or Instrument , under God , of bringing his Children into Life and Being ; 'tis God who is the Former and Maker of them ; the Substance of which we were made was of God's Creation , and 'twas by his curious Art that we were contrived and moulded into the Form wherein we are. Our *Substance* (as the *Psalmist* speaks , *Psal. cxxxix. 15, 16.*) *was not hid from him, when we were made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the Earth.* *His Eyes did see our Substance yet being unperfect, and in his Book all our Members were written, which in Continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* 'Twas he also, who when he had formed

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the Body into humane Shape, and fram'd and fitted all the Parts of it, (some of them so very small and fine, that they not only exceed humane Power to form, but are too fine so much as to be discerned by humane Eyes, *nay even with the help of Mycrosopes*; 'twas he, I say, who then) made that near and vital Union between Soul and Body, which we were so far from being able to make, that we are not able to give any Account of it now it is made. So that in truth the admirable Power and Workmanship of God is as clearly discernible in bringing Men into Being in the way of ordinary Generation, as it was in the Creation of the first Man out of the Dust of the Ground; only it being common, we take no Notice of it. For this is our way, what is rare and unusual, strikes us with Admiration; but the same, or a stranger thing, if it be common, if it be what we see every Day, we pass over without Observation.

Seeing then that God is more truly our Father than Man; if that small part which

which the Parent has in bringing his Child into Being, produces such strong Affection towards it, that he cannot but love it, and desire its Welfare, and contribute what in him lies towards it; can it be thought that God does not likewise bear a fatherly Affection to the Creatures which he has made, to the Work of his own Hands? If then a Father will not refuse Bread to his hungry Child, when he has it to give, and the Child asks it of him; how can we fear that God should deny the reasonable Requests of the same Person, who is much more *his Child*, than he was his earthly Father's; especially if the same Person be the Child of God, not only by Creation, but likewise by Adoption and Grace, and being (as the *Apostle* speaks,) *begotten again unto a lively Hope*, behaves himself dutifully and obediently towards him; and is (as the same *Apostle* exhorts,) *a Follower of God, as a dear Child ought to be?*

II. Another thing observable, in the Comparison here made by our *Saviour* between

between God and an earthly Father, upon which he grounds his Argument to persuade us of the Truth and certain Accomplishment of the Promise he had before made, *Ask, and ye shall receive*; is the greater *Knowledge* that there is in God, than is in Men, whereby he *knows* the *Wants* of his Children, and *how to supply* the same better than any Man does. *If* (says our *Saviour*,) *ye know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall God give good things to those that ask him?* i. e. he knows how to do this much better than earthly Parents do.

Now there is no earthly Parent but knows the Difference between *Bread* and *a Stone*, between *a Fish* and *a Serpent*; and if his Son asks him for the former, i. e. for *Bread*, or *a Fish*, he gives it him, because he knows these to be good for Food, and that Food is necessary to preserve Life. And on the other side, if the Son thro' a childish Mistake should, when he is hungry, ask for a *Stone* instead of *Bread*, i. e. should ask for some-
thing

thing which was altogether unprofitable, and would not answer his End in asking for it ; and much rather if he should ask for a *Serpent* instead of a *Fish*, *i. e.* for something, which if he had it would do him Hurt rather than Good. The Father, in this Case, would only pity the Ignorance of his Child, and give him that which he should, and that which, if he had been wiser, he would have asked for, and not that thing which he did desire.

But the Wisdom of God does infinitely more exceed ours, than the Wisdom of any Father does that of his Child ; we may be sure, therefore, that he knows better how to give good Gifts to us than we know how to do it to our Children ; we may be sure that he understands better, even than we our selves do, whether our Requests are fit to be granted. And therefore, if we have not what we asked for, we may reasonably conclude that we were mistaken in our Petition ; and that what God does give us in Answer to our Prayers, is really better for

us

us than that which we our selves did desire. *Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him:* so our *Saviour* had told us, in the 8th Verse of the foregoing Chapter. If therefore he had known that those things which we asked were needful for us; being *our Father*, he would not have denied them; and if he has not given us what we asked, but somewhat else, we may be sure that what he gave was more needful, more profitable for us, than what we would have had.

III. Another thing which I proposed to consider, in the Comparison here made by our *Saviour* between God and Men, is the *Power* of God, infinitely superior to the *Power* of any earthly Father, whereby he is able to give to his Children every thing which they want, which is more, many times, than earthly Fathers can do. And this is another very good Ground of Assurance that *if we ask, we shall receive;* because he is able to do for us as much or more than we ask.

ask. *If ye (says our Saviour,) i. e. ye,* who are but Men; *ye, who are but of small Power;* *ye, who have but little to give;* yet *know how to give good Gifts unto your Children;* *i. e. are able nevertheless to give necessary Food to your Children,* *how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven,* *i. e. who is above all,* who has all Power in his Hands, *how much more shall he give good things to them that ask him?*

For it can't be supposed that a Father, if indeed he has the Affection of a Father, should refuse to his Son any thing that he needs, or does reasonably desire, unless it be either because he has it not to give, or because he cannot part with it without great Inconvenience to himself; and for one of these Reasons, a Son's Prayer to his earthly Father may be sometimes without Success; he may beg even for *Bread*, and his Father may have none to give him; or perhaps may not have sufficient for himself; and tho' he loves his Son well, yet may love himself better; or his Son may ask some other

ther thing of him, which, tho' it be in his Power to give, he could not give, at least not in so great a Measure as his Son desires, without prejudicing his other Children, for whom he has a like Affection, and too much lessening their Portion.

The Question which was put by *Esaū*, to his Father *Isaac*, when his Brother *Jacob* had come by Subtilty, and taken away his Blessing, Gen. xxvii. 38. *Hast thou but one Blessing, my Father? Bless me, even me also, O my Father.* This Question, I say, and Petition, is what a great many Parents can answer only in the Negative; they had but one Blessing, and that they have given away already. By their Kindness to one Son they may have disabled themselves from doing the like, or indeed any considerable Kindness to another Son, who had as much Reason to desire and expect it from him.

But these can never be the Reasons of our heavenly Father's not granting our Petitions; for he, who has all Power in his

his Hands, can never want Power to do us all the Good which we can desire; and he, whose Riches are infinite and boundless, can never want to give to any Person who asks him, what he has already given to another; his Store is inexhaustible, and how much soever he gives to one, he has as much remaining as he had before, to give to any other of his Children that makes the same Request. To him therefore, as to a constantly overflowing Fountain, we may at all times go, without fear of ever returning back without quenching our Thirst: *to him we may, in every thing, i.e. in all our Wants or Distresses, by Prayer and Supplication make known our Requests,* and be sure that if they should not be answered according to our Desire, the Reason cannot be because they could not, but only because they were not fit to be in such manner answered. But,

IV. Lastly; there is in the Comparison here made by our *Saviour* between God and Men, another Difference taken No-

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tice of, which renders our Prayers to God much more hopeful, than the Prayers of any Son are, or can be, to his earthly Father; and that is, in their *Goodness*, which is not in all Men so great as it appears to be; which in the best Men of all is limited and finite; but in God, is infinite and boundless, far beyond the Goodness of the best Men, and the kindest Fathers upon Earth: upon which Account he may justly be presumed more ready to do good to his Children, than any earthly Fathers are. And 'tis this Difference that our *Saviour* in the Text seems to lay the greatest Stress upon. *If ye, says he, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven* (who is good, for this must be understood to be implied, tho' it be not mentioned; how much more shall your heavenly Father, who is good,) *give good things to them that ask him?* i.e. If you can and do reasonably expect Good from those who are evil, with much greater Reason may you expect to receive

Good

Good from him who is good, from him
who is the Fountain of all Good, from
him who is Goodness it self.

For this is the Truth of the Case; all Men are evil; more or less, they are all so; *there is none good but one, that is, God*, says our Saviour, Matth. xix. 17. i.e. there is none perfectly and completely so but only God. In all Men there is a Mixture of Evil; nay, comparatively with God, the Angels themselves are not good, Job xv. 15. the holy Angels are impure, the Heavens are not clean, the Stars are not pure in his Sight, Job xxv. 5. and, *his Angels he chargeth with Folly*, Job iv. 18. So we are told in the Book of Job, Ch. xv. 14. *What then is Man, that he should be clean? And he that is born of a Woman, that he should be righteous?* But God is good; he is essentially so, and therefore he is always so. *With him there is no Variableness, nor so much as a Shadow of turning*, as St. James says, Ch. i. §. 17.

All Men, even the best of Men, are evil, in the same Sense wherein the *Psal-*

mist says *all Men are Liars.* In which Words 'tis not implied that there never is any Truth in Men, but only that they are not necessarily true and faithful; that 'tis not impossible that every Man should be a Liar, and therefore not improbable that a great many are so; and because they may lye, we cannot be certainly assured that they do not lye. We may be deceived, in trusting in those whom we think the most faithful. And so, I say, here, all earthly Parents are *evil*, altho' some of them do, in fact, love their Children most dearly, and would not deny them any thing that is reasonable; yet there are some others, of whom this cannot be truly said. And even they who are good might have been otherwise; and there are few or none so perfectly good, as to be clearly exempt from all Spice of Envy, or Malice, or vicious Self-Love, which may be in some Degree prejudicial to the true Interest of their Children. But God is all Love and Goodness; there is no Mixture of Envy or Malice in him; he truly desires the Welfare of all his Children,

Children, of all his Creatures; *his tender Mercy is over all his Works*, and he can never be so much as tempted to evil. If therefore from earthly Parents, such as they generally are, either *evil*, or at least liable to be so, Children may nevertheless, and generally do expect to have their reasonable Petitions granted, much more may we well expect the same from God, whose Goodness is infinite, who is always as kind and gracious to all his Creatures, as a just and wise Being can be; and therefore this is made by St. James a good Encouragement to us, to put up our Requests to him, with Assurance of Success, *Jam. i. 5. If any of you lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* Having to deal with such a tender, gracious, and compassionate Father, we may well (as the *Author to the Hebrews* exhorts, *Heb. iv. 13.*) come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in time of need. We can have no Reason to fear that God

will

will ever deny us any thing that is fit for us to ask, or for our Good to receive. *For if ye, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask him?*

But this same Argument, taken from the Consideration of the Knowledge, and Power, and Goodness of God, and of that near Relation which as a Father he bears to us, tho' it be urged here by our *Saviour* to no other Purpose but only to beget in us Faith and a good Assurance in Prayer, and a full Confidence that the Promise he had made in the foregoing Words, *ask, and ye shall receive,* shall be punctually fulfilled; might be urged to several other good Purposes. And therefore, I hope, it will not be thought a Digression from the Text, or if it be a Digression, I hope it may be an useful one, before I put an End to my Discourse upon these Words, briefly to mention three or four very common Cases, wherein the Consideration of God's fatherly Relation

Relation to us, and of the Greater Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, that are in God our heavenly Father, than are in any Father upon Earth; which must be granted to be true, or else it must be said that our *Saviour's Argument* in the Text is weak and faulty; wherein, I say, the Consideration of these Truths, which the Text suggests to us, and which I have in the foregoing Discourse laid before you, may serve to afford great Content and Comfort to our Minds. But I fear I should be too tedious if I should do this now, and therefore I shall defer it to another Opportunity.

F I N I S.





30. V. A. L. 9.